とある魔術の禁書目録（インデックス）9
鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ
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Toaru Majutsu no Index - Volume 9

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Toaru Majutsu no Index 9

The largest scale event held in Academy City, the "Daihaseisai".

Academy City, which has institutes to develop supernatural abilities, is the venue of a sports festival where all the schools in the city come together to host. This is the said super large scale event.

Of course, Kamijou Touma would also be taking part in that event. However, his "misfortune" had detrimental effects on his health, which led to a hungry Index finding her teeth into him; led to him being blamed by Daihaseisai management committee member Fukiyose Seiri; led to him receiving shocks from Misaka Mikoto in the middle of a match...!?

In the middle of that, a mysterious magical artefact, "Stab Sword", is moving around, and a certain magician is getting ready to launch an attack on Academy City.

Oriana Thomson. One of the premier "transporters" in the world of magic, this "Route Disturb" is planning to...!

When science and magic cross paths, this shall be where the story of Kamijou Touma begins...!

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とある魔術の禁書目録 インデックス ⑨
鎌池和馬
電撃文庫
570

9784840233859
1920193005707

ISBN4-8402-3385-3
C0193 ¥570E

MediaWorks
Published by MediaWorks
Recommended Retail Price: 570 JPY
*Consumption levy would be added to the price separately

Kamachi Kazuma

Speaking of which, I think I always release a book in April since debut. This series too shall have a reason to welcome spring for the third time.
...But the flow of time while working on the story still feels about the same.

(Products of Dengeki Bunko)

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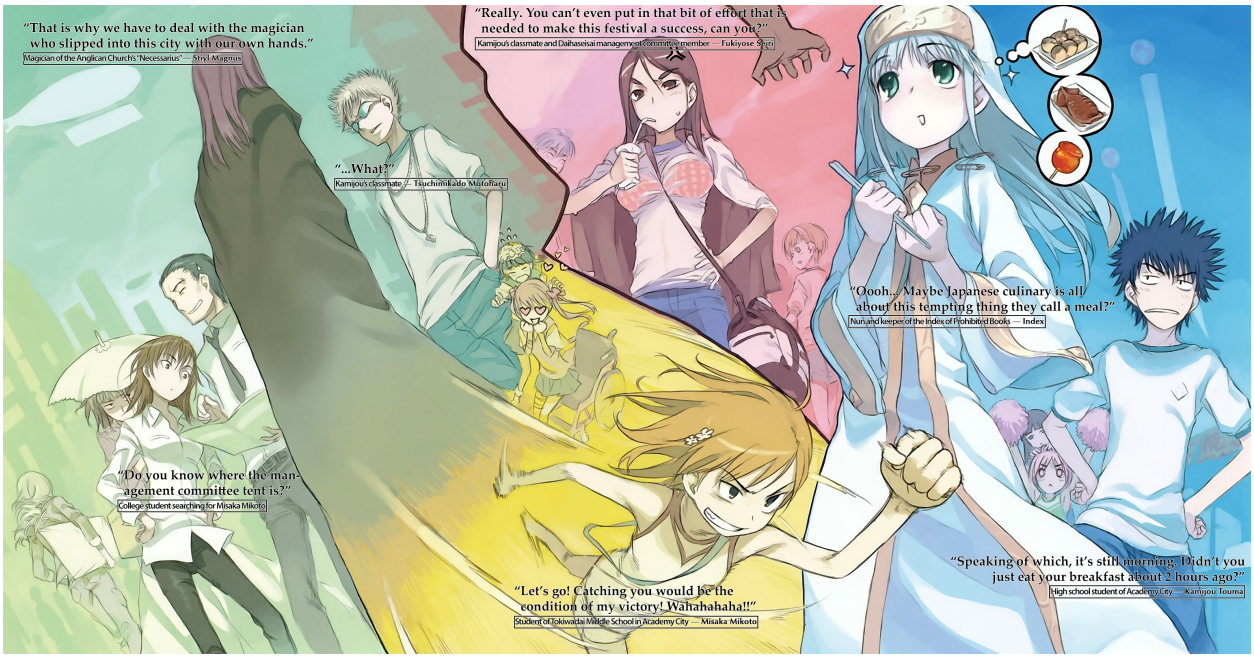
Illustrator: Haimura Kiyotaka

Born in 1973. Recently, like a "fake illustrator", I had days of going over to a coffee shop everyday to work out new ideas.
Once the staff got too close, I hide the drawing with haste like nothing happened.

カバー／鋏田剛

"My, what a mess. It's just a warm up exercise, but your legs can't move already?"
Transporter for the Roman Catholic Church, "Route Disturb" — Oriana Thomson

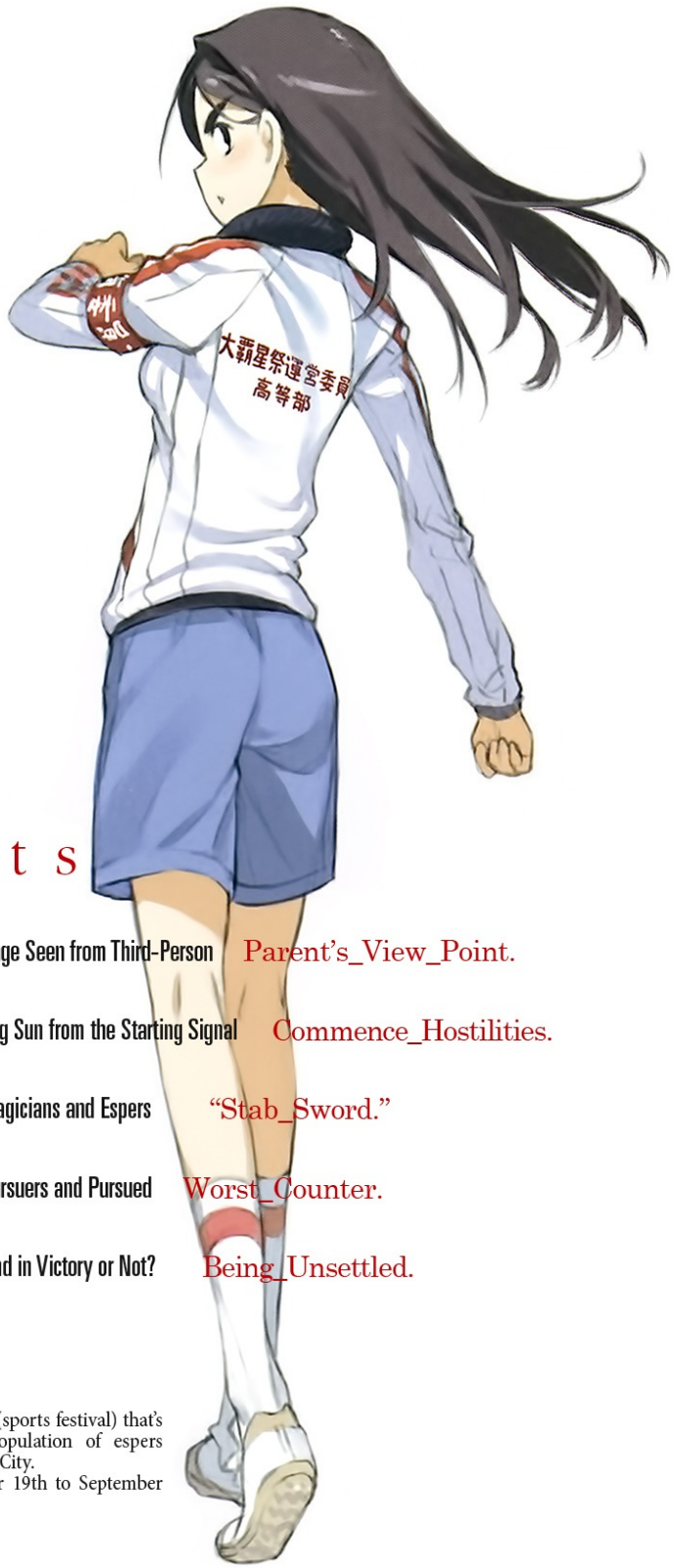

"That is why we have to deal with the magician who slipped into this city with our own hands."
Magician of the Anglican Church's "Necessarius" — Stiyl Magnus
"Really. You can't even put in that bit of effort that is needed to make this festival a success, can you?"
Kamijou's classmate and Daihaseisai management committee member — Fukiyose Shiori
"...What?"
Kamijou's classmate — Tsuchimikado Motoharu
"Oooh... Maybe Japanese culinary is all about this tempting thing they call a meal?"
Nun and keeper of the Index of Prohibited Books — Index
"Do you know where the management committee tent is?"
College student searching for Misaka Mikoto
"Let's go! Catching you would be the condition of my victory! Wahahahaha!!"
Student of Tokiwadai Middle School in Academy City — Misaka Mikoto
"Speaking of which, it's still morning. Didn't you just eat your breakfast about 2 hours ago?"
High school student of Academy City — Kamijou Touma

とある魔術の禁書目録 インデックス 9

鎌池和馬
イラスト／灰村キヨタカ

[Stab Sword]

Selected with a religious meaning for executing and stabbing people to death. This spiritual weapon, at its utmost limit, can be made to amplify, concentrate and focus. Word handed down through generations has it "able to stop even dragons from weaving through the vast lands they go through".
Even though it does not have any effects on normal humans, if the opponent is a "Saint", the Saint would be resigned to oblivion in an instant by pointing the tip of the sword towards them, regardless of distance.



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[Daihaseisai]

This is the overall large-scale event (sports festival) that's held amongst the 2.3 million population of espers amongst all the schools in Academy City.
It lasts for 7 days, from September 19th to September 25th.

Prologue: Preparations Stage Seen from Third-person. *Parent's_View_Point.*

The **Daihaseisai**.[1]

A seven-day event that took place from September 19-25 at Academy City, it was basically a huge athletics competition. The meet gathered all the schools in the city together, and in this place of ESP research in western Tokyo where 80 percent of the total population of just under 2.3 million people consisted of students, it was not an event to be taken lightly.

The day was the 19th, the first day of the festival.

Even though it was an early weekday morning, the city was already filled with the families of the festival participants. If the board of directors hadn't prohibited travel by car as part of their plans to deal with all the visitors, the congestion would probably extend for tens of kilometers within the city. Since it would otherwise be faster just to walk at a time like this, they were temporarily increasing the number of running trains and subways, as well as preparing unmanned shuttles throughout the city. It was surprising that with the degree of overcrowding, there just weren't enough drivers to go around.

Although everywhere one looked resembled a station platform at rush hour, that was just a testament to the Daihaseisai's claim to fame as one of the largest events around.

As Academy City was only open to the public a handful of times per year, this was a special time, especially since the participants would be using ESP like people would normally see in the movies to compete. While the events were the same as any other athletics festival, for those who say "Well, I'm familiar with it from television, but I've never seen it in person", to be able to experience the mysterious power known as ESP first-hand seemed to be quite an exciting and fascinating thing that outsiders to Academy City could take some amount of pride in.

Supposedly.

Within that futuristic city, a man and a woman were walking together.

“Ohh, kaa-san, kaa-san. No matter how many times I see it, it really is overwhelming, this Academy City. It feels kind of like the expansive world I’d draw with crayons when I was a kid. If only there were trains running through tubes and flying skateboards, it would be perfect…”

The one speaking was Kamijou Touya, a certain lad’s father. He was wearing plain slacks and a business shirt with his sleeves rolled all the way up to his shoulders. His impractical tie that seemed to have been a gift remained loose, and his work boots stomped along with a merciless sound.

In contrast to Touya,

“Oh my, oh my. I don’t think this place is even close to how I imagined the future. There aren’t any galactic battle cruisers, or wars against alliances or empires of humanoid species, or red and blue lasers flying through space that give off 'pyu, pyu' sounds even though it’s supposed to be in a vacuum, right? And I also want to see those sabers that glow like a lamp…”

The one who replied was Kamijou Shiina, a certain lad’s mother. She looked half Touya’s age and even their clothes made them seem incompatible. She was wearing a one-piece dress possibly made of silk or some other delicate materials that looked extremely smooth and reached down to her ankles. On top of that she wore a cardigan. In her arms she was holding the handle of a basket that probably contained their boxed lunches. Upon her head was a wide-brimmed hat and she seemed to give off an aura of extreme upper class.

Rather than husband and wife, they seemed more like an aristocrat’s young daughter and her chauffeur. They were walking to the event grounds where their son was going to be participating in the opening ceremonies.

“Kaa-san, I think instead of the ‘near’ future, you’d call it the far distant future. Although, if it’s something like a lightsaber you’re looking for, you could probably find it in this city…Well, let’s stop with this reckless conversation. Don’t you agree? The mood is so nice. Let’s not ruin it with talk of waste and destruction, hm?”

In the sky, bursting fireworks that let off white smoke could be seen. What seemed to be news helicopters were flying all over the place. As the city was generally open during the Daihaseisai, even television relays had been approved. Seats for commentators had been set up, and temporary studios had even been built here and there within the city. The potential ratings were on par with that of the World Cup, so they were probably feeling frantic, Touya thought as a businessman.

Just then, someone crossed in front of them.

Upon an automatic patrol bot that looked like a drum, a girl wearing a maid uniform was sitting. Similar to a salesgirl at a baseball stadium, she had a tray on her stomach that was supported by a cord around the back of her neck,

“Hey~. Maid lunches, wouldn’tcha like one of Academy City’s famous maid lunches~? Anyone want a boxed lunch from the Ryouran Domestic Studies Institute for Girls, well, actually made by a maid apprentice~?”

As the couple watched dumbfounded at the odd sales pitch, the patrol bot carrying the maid silently ran off. Moreover, considering that she was calling it a maid lunch, it seemed more like a toshikazu-styled lunch instead.

Going “Oh my”, Shiina held her cheeks,

“…There really are a lot of different schools in Academy City, aren’t there.”

While he continued walking, Touya also watched the maid (apprentice, to be exact) girl as she disappeared from sight,

“Well, it is a place that consolidates the various institutions in the world into one area, after all. I guess they would have things like the domestic studies from various nations of the world. But, this city really is something when they have maids walking the streets like it’s noth---Ah, uwah?!”

Not paying attention, Touya crashed into someone.

“Kyah! Ah, I’m sorry for running into you.”

The one apologizing seemed to be a female college student. She was wearing a faded gray business shirt and long black slacks. They were of simple design, but

a single glance revealed that they were brand-name with an appearance that wouldn't look odd even if worn by a company president in a meeting. However, in contrast with her attire, it wasn't a considerably harsh aura, but somehow the woman gave the impression of a delinquent being forced to dress up for an occasion. She was the complete opposite of Touya who wore business attire day in and day out for work.

The woman Touya ran into put on a friendly smile,

"Ah, I think I've become lost now. Umm, sorry but do you know where Tokiwadai Middle School is from here?"

"Hm…Um, wait just a moment please."

Touya rummaged around before pulling out a brochure. Academy City was huge and the number of different schools participating was significant as well, so it was as thick as a guidebook one would normally take on a trip overseas. Giving up on finding it directly on the map, he turned to the index at the back of the book,

"Toki, Toki…I don't see it. Tokiwadai Middle School doesn't appear to be on the list. Maybe this is what they meant in the introduction when they said the official pamphlet wasn't at liberty to cover everything?"

"Uwah! Is that right? Then, just where could that Mikoto be~! Even after I told her I'd be taking a leave of absence from the university to come here!"

Could Mikoto be the name of her younger sister? Touya was wondering while looking over the guidebook when she suddenly moved closer. Touching shoulders with Touya, she was looking at the page he had unfolded.

"To, To, To, Toki, Toki, Toki---Uwah! It really isn't there! What am I supposed to do?!!"

Apparently without a set meeting place (As it was just before the opening ceremony, her cell phone was probably off as well), the woman moaned in despair. Her defenseless cheeks seemed on the verge of colliding with Touya's unshaven face. Her soft hair gently brushed against his ear. A sweet smell drifted from those soft strands.

Touya quickly turned his face away, when,

“Oh my, oh my, Touya-san. Again?”

“K, kaa-san? W-what do you mean by ‘again’?”

As Touya gave his discretionary response, Shiina brought one hand up to her cheek and gave a sorrowful sigh that came from the depths of her heart. Even so, he could feel a darkness growing beyond her facade.

“Geez, Touya-san. Befriending a woman you run into on the road, then developing such a nice mood using those unassuming words and actions. Just how many times does this make? Too many to count I should think. Oh my oh my, oh dear. To make me so angry, maybe Touya-san is a masochist?”

While Shiina’s face was starting to match the intensity of such portraits as found on the backs of the 1000 or 5000 yen bills, the woman standing next to Touya continued to grasp his arm without noticing Shiina’s change at all while saying things like “Hey, do you know where the management committee tent is? Hey, do you?”. As for Touya,

‘Kaa-san is scary~! B-but, but kaa-san’s minor bouts of jealousy are kind of cute as well, so what should I do?!’, he wondered as he wasn’t sure if he should defuse the situation or just savor it,

“Oh my. Isn’t that Touma-san?”

Seeing how Shiina’s attention had been drawn elsewhere, Touya secretly relaxed. ‘I’m saved. But, I wonder why I’m sort of disappointed?’, Touya wondered to himself as he followed Shiina’s line of sight. Next to him, the woman was still holding onto his arm as she looked at the pamphlet.

There was a crowd in front of them. Most of those within the crowd were of course students wearing gym clothes. Though they could be lumped together under the description gym clothes, each of the schools had their own uniform; however, they were all wearing either red or white headbands.

Past the crowd, they recognized their own child making an annoyed gloomy expression. As he was participating in the Daihaseisai, of course he was wearing a short-sleeves and shorts gym uniform. Next to him, there was a girl wearing

running shorts and an actual uniform suited for track and field. Looking up from the spread out pamphlet, the woman pointed at the girl with the shoulder-length brown hair, “Ah. That’s my Mikoto. I’m so glad. The university was so busy, and we hadn’t talked about setting a meeting place or anything.”, she started explaining.

It seemed that, with all the congestion between them, the children on the other side hadn’t noticed their parents.

However, with the way they were speaking to one another so loudly, their words at least made their way over clearly.

“Hey, tell me, red or white, which side did you end up on?”

“What? Oh, I’m on red. Huh, could it be that you’re also on red?”

“Y-yeah.”

“Ohh, okay then. Let’s make sure to do our best together—”

“Well, umm, if there’s a contest where all the red members are together—”

“Actually! The truth is I’m on the white team!!”

“…?!”

“Just look at my white headband! It signifies our resolution to leave not a single one of you standing!! Anyway, joining forces would have been impossible. Think of the difference between a middle schooler and a high schooler! We’re going to snatch up all the points, so prepare yourself!!”

“Why you! Hmph, looking down on us just because we’re younger. We’ll blow away your weakling white team!!”

“Yeah right~, as if! Actually, if I lose to you somehow, why don’t we have a penalty game! I’ll listen to anything you say!”

“Y-you’ve said it now. You’ve got a deal… Anything, right? Fine.”

“Fine then, little Miss Tokiwadai! Even though you never beat me, you sure

dream big! So alternatively, if you lose, then there will also be a penalty game."

"Wha! T-then, in other words, that means a-anything you say…"

"Hmm? Looks like you're shaking, Misaka-sa~n. Is this all the self-confidence you've got after running your mouth like that just now, hmm?"

"…Fine. Let's do it. Don't try to cry your way out of this afterwards!"

"I see, I see. With that said, the penalty festival starts now!!"

What did you say *spark spark*!! With a bolt mixed in as the two clamored, their guardians watched them stiffly. There seemed to be a bit of a gap between their ideal visions of their child.

Kamijou Shiina placed both hands on her cheeks,

"Oh my, oh my…Speaking so cleverly and making such an unreasonable request of such a young girl like that, who on earth could he take after I wonder? Oh dear, now that I think about it, it reminds me of my younger days."

Kamijou Touya showed a shocked face,

"W-what the. Saying anything goes in a penalty game with a middle school girl, just what sort of thing are you planning to make her do, Touma!!"

As for the woman next to him, 'Is this because of their influence? Well, I'll have to have a talk with Mikoto about this afterwards. So young and naïve…', was what she was thinking as she sighed and placed one hand on her forehead.

And so, the seven-day Academy City unified athletics festival known as the Daihaseisai began.

Chapter 1: Under the Blazing Sun from the Starting Signal. *Commence_Hostilities.*

Part 1

The St. George's Cathedral in London.

This building was somewhat too big to be called a church, and too small to be called a Cathedral. Inside this construct that was unimpressive in a certain sense, the leader of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop Laura Stuart, was standing around leisurely.

Right now, it was 9 AM in Japan, and in England, which used the world standard clock, it was midnight now. Although this was the capital of a country, there was a sense of tranquility around Laura, which could even be described as serious. Under the gentle night and the cooling night breeze, the day came to a close.

She was alone inside the church, where the candle lights were blown out.

Laura set a chair in front of the altar and sat on it. She was wearing a simple nun's habit that had a pure white base color, with recognizable colored threads like black, red, green, purple, gold and silver woven into pictures. Besides that, her clothes were covered in decorative cloth used for higher-order clergymen. This was formal attire worn when she was visiting other people.

Christian society was like any ordinary culture; clothing was a method used to declare the person's identity and position. Although it sounded serious, it was like how tall a chef's hat was or a student's uniform, or anything that signified status.

For someone like Laura, who was different from normal nuns, she had to prepare

different sets of nuns' robes according to the season, time, location, occasion, position on the matter, and ambition. Sometimes she would purposely wear clothes that indicated a lower standing in order to raise the status of the guest; sometimes she would purposely wear clothes that indicate a higher standing to show her dissatisfaction…there were a lot of ways to do this that were really complicated and troublesome.

(In front of God, everyone's an equal brother…is it? This statement is rather impressive.)

The Archbishop couldn't help but scoff regarding things like stand and status. Laura felt that it was too cumbersome to do all that. Her graceful look didn't just rely solely on her clothes.

The most noticeable thing about her was her golden hair that was 2.5 times the length of her body. She normally clipped her hair, but she didn't do so this time. The fluffy hair that was released hung over her shoulders and went all the way down, with the remaining part lying on the floor.

Laura, who was sitting on the chair, placed an entire set of gold and silver combs on her legs. She selected one from the pile of combs, which had different teeth length, width and spacing, and carefully let her hair go past the comb like the strings of a harp. It was impossible to reach the end of her hair, that was even longer than her height, just by stretching her hands. So Laura gracefully pulled the hair nearer with her hands.

Suddenly, she accidentally dropped her comb. Her golden hair faithfully demonstrated this by flapping up and down, like waves near a beach.

After combing all her hair through once, she changed to another one, and after that was done, changed to another one. She continued to do this, as if the order of the combs used was very important.

Shining on her hair was the moonlight passing through the window and the LCD display on the altar.

The set up of the screen and the communication equipment, which were already there, had been done at the last minute by an organization based in Academy City that had associates in London.

It was supposed to have been Stiyl's job, but he was not in England now.

Kanzaki Kaori had said several times that 'this is something similar to a cell phone,' and had tried to connect this brand new gadget. But after she sat down and analyzed the instruction manual, she stared back like an abandoned puppy.

"What are you doing?"

A displeased voice came from the screen. It was hard to tell whether that voice belonged to a man or a woman, an adult or a child, a Saint or a criminal. Laura did not turn to look at where the voice came from. Besides, the one appearing on the screen should be a 'man' floating upside down in fluid.

The Board Chairman of Academy City, Aleister.

Laura, whose extremely long hair hung down from her shoulders, quietly said,

"Don't you know? I'm combing my hair. A man shouldn't be seeing a woman doing make-up."

She chuckled,

"Several centuries ago, among the English Noblewomen, there were methods to scorch their hair by either using the sun or the moon. The best-looking blonde hair was called the 'Sun's hair', and it was the greatest virtue for one to accomplish this. Isn't it stylish to do this without the need of dyes?"

Laura tried to stifle her laughter, but there was no response from the screen.

She twisted her neck and looked at the LCD screen.

"What's wrong? To remain silent while I'm talking with you……"

There was no response from the screen.

Just when Laura was feeling puzzled, a voice came from the other side.

"No……actually, I've been trying to ask you something."

"Hm?"

“To be honest, your Japanese sounds really weird. Or are you treating me as an idiot by saying this? Which one is it?”

Laura stopped what she was doing.

The comb that was gliding through her hair trembled slightly.

“You……you……do you know what you’re talking about!? There’s no need to talk about etiquette with a man who doesn’t believe in God, just some simple words are enough for you!”

“I see.…..if you prefer to use such a special accent, it’s alright. What I’m trying to say is that if you’re really frustrated about this, I can send a Japanese teacher to teach you the language. I am the one who ruled over knowledge after all!”

“Uu! I’m not bothered by it! Why would I bother about a language used by a small country in the Far East?”

Laura, who was combing through her hair quickly, loudly declared.

There was no response from the screen, and there were no bystanders as the sound of Laura combing her hair quickly echoed throughout the hall.

After a while, Aleister seemed like he wanted to change the topic, and said,

“However, why do you want to comb your hair in front of the guest? Shouldn’t you have done it before having a conversation?”

Although she didn’t like this topic, Laura felt that at least they could break away from the original topic, as her tone and attitude seemed calmer than before.

“There’s no time. Actually, night is the time when women are in their bedrooms doing their make-up. Please don’t mind me doing this during our conversation.”

“Hmm, I guess that’s the result of the ‘Sun’s hair’ that you talked about, right? The myth about the moonlight should be a superstition, but the myth about the sun is actually due to the ultraviolet rays that caused the hair to lose colour pigments. This is probably an idea gained from books fading in colour due to overexposure to the sun. But I’ll give you some advice.…..you’ll get hair loss!”

"……This is rather rude when we're still developing our diplomatic relations."

Laura looked away. The hair that was lying on the floor like a rug was reflecting light from the LCD screen. The shiny hair that had been carefully combed with the gold and silver combs now reflected other colors like red and blue.

She again muttered, "So rude."

"I have informed you earlier the reason why I wanted to contact you, so let me confirm it again. Also, I would like to thank you for agreeing to our unreasonable request."

"If you're talking about the time difference, there's no need to worry about it. This is the time when we start our work anyway."

"What I want to say is that it's rude of us to interrupt you when you're doing your work."

Laura looked at her hair that was reflecting light, and said,

"It seems like the opening ceremony is under way. As the leader, shouldn't you go up to the stage and say hello to them?"

"……Do you think I can let people see me like this?"

"Hoho, you're right, this isn't appropriate for the occasion."

At that moment, Laura turned to look at the LCD screen on the altar.

There was a person floating upside-down inside a transparent cylindrical tank filled with red liquid. No matter how one saw it, it was unsuitable for this person, who was wearing a green lab coat, to appear in public like that.

Also, he would be able to remain in this state for a thousand years (maybe, since Laura wasn't sure about the exact details). People would find that there was something wrong if he were to appear in public quite often. Of course, he would have to change his looks and name if he was to do this.

Laura Stuart's actual age didn't match her looks as well, but she was not the type

that would look at others who were learning from their mistakes and laugh at them.

“Then I'll go on, if you don’t mind. I'll give a short summary, for I don’t have much time left.”

A sigh came from the LCD screen.

“……Is it regarding someone who invaded Academy City?”

Um.

Laura nodded her head.

“Right now, you’re unable to identify the invaders from the visitors. It’s impossible to carry out security checks smoothly because you people have to accommodate ordinary civilians.”

Laura was rather familiar with this. During a large-scale gathering like a worship or Christmas celebration, if they wanted to use tight, almost foolproof security to protect the people, the people’s actions would have to be limited, and it would affect the proceedings of the events severely. In order not to delay the proceedings of the events, they had to give a certain amount of ‘freedom’.

“The magicians seemed to have taken this opportunity to attack Academy City when there’s a hole they can thread into. According to our reports, there are two confirmed invaders. One is an important member of the Roman Catholic Church, and the other is a transporter that she hired.”

“A transporter? Let me confirm this, is she here to destroy and do battle?”

“Yes. The name of the transporter is Oriana Thomson, and the one who hired her is Lidvia Lorenzetti. They’re trying to buy a certain good.”

Laura grabbed a bundle of notes that was lying beside the LCD screen, and waved it in front of screen. The words were very small, but since the other party was from Academy City, which boasted the use of technology unknown to the outside world, he wouldn’t use words like ‘I can’t see clearly’ so easily.

“First, Oriana Thomson. As her name indicates, she’s born in England, but she’s

probably now Italian. She's known as **Route Disturb**,[2] a top-notch courier in the magical world. This woman's ability is that she's able to run and hide, and that she's able to get away from pursuers even if they find her."

More accurately, Oriana was a woman who would do anything to get away from her pursuers. Also, nobody was able to keep track of her actions. Even when they were prepared, she would still be able to get away. Oriana Thomson was a magician with many spells at her disposal, and she would destroy bridges, create fires, set up many talismans to get her pursuers off her. Also, she was a beauty who would sometimes use that weakness of humans.

One could imagine from Oriana's original British nationality how many times she had clashed with the Anglican Church while she was in London. While Necessarius had been pursuing Oriana, they had been stopped by many people, who had no links with magic, claiming to be her 'best friend.' She was not just a battle berserker, she knew how to use a 'human wall' formed by the crowd and slip inside.

"Next, Lidvia Lorenzetti, a radical among the Roman Catholic Church, also known as **Mardi Gras**.[3] She's known for evangelising to the people that the Church rejected, and got some converts to further carry out evangelism."

She was different from Oriana, and was a Roman Catholic born in the Vatican. She was in a very high position, but never 'tried to aim higher'. Instead, she found spreading the gospel to the world much more meaningful. She was a person 'who would do anything to spread the Word'. As a reward, the pope himself specially gave her a platinum staff that was decorated with silk, but she immediately sold it without thinking to finance her travels.

Those that were 'saved' by Lidvia, and who wanted to 'save even more people', were geniuses who had never seen the light of day, and most of them were people like criminals and cult believers. Lidvia's talent was in finding these talents that would normally be executed.

Not only did she have the ability to find hidden talent, she was also able to control and manage problematic people.

Even if it was the Roman Catholic Church, who would kill any sinner that they meet and burn any non-believer, they couldn't formally attack anyone who was

properly recognized as converted. The higher ups who hated these problematic people viewed Lidvia as a thorn in their side. And to the Archbishop Laura, she was a formidable opponent.

If she was just brazenly raising magicians, the Anglican Church could still stop them; but they would be seen as evil if she was teaching them about the Bible and the gospel as well.

"They're rather prominent in your world, huh? I've never heard of them before. Who's the guy they're dealing with?"

"It's unknown as of now. Right now, the biggest suspect is Bishop Nikolai Tolstoy of the Russian Church."

Although Nikolai wasn't as extreme as the Roman Catholic Church to abandon 'the non-believers', he was known as a cunning man who would reap the benefits in an argument between two parties.

"Then, the good that they're delivering…can you tell me what it is?"

"If I don't tell you the name and the item, you guys probably won't be able to find it, right?"

Laura's gaze left the screen as she said "Coming!" She raised 'something' that was placed on the ground.

"Is that a sword?"

"It's just a duplicate that I borrowed from the British Museum. Like as how you see it, however, there are no magical effects."

The sword that Laura was holding was made of marble. It was 1.5m long, and the width…of the cross-guard was 35cm on both sides, making it 70cm wide. It was about 10cm thick. As it was a duplicate, there was no blade. Instead, the edge of the sword was as sharp as a sharpened pencil.

"It's called the '**Stab Sword**'.[4] I can't explain its effect, but it's said to be able to slay a dragon in half and stitch it to the ground. It's magical value and effect is enormous. If it's successfully delivered, we'll be in immediate trouble. Britain herself may end up being involved in a war."

The ‘Stab Sword’ was a spiritual weapon that could take down the ‘pillar’ that was extremely important to a Christian sect. Once they destroyed the ‘pillar’, the surrounding enemies would take advantage when the sect was weakened and attack them in one go.

The ‘pillar’ referred to the Saints in Christianity.

The ‘Stab Sword’ could utterly destroy the Saints, who had combat capabilities and powers equivalent to that of a nuclear bomb.

“Mm, it’s like that tactical weapon that your side developed.”

Aleister looked at the sword in question through the screen, and said,

“Would you mind explaining what the error is if this sword is used in Academy City? According to the situation, it seems that we have to evacuate ordinary civilians.”

“You don’t have to worry. This is a weapon that can only be used on the magic side. There won’t be any effects if it’s used on your side.”

“I see. If you can give us its structure and origin, we can come up with some strategies.”

“Oh, the citizens of the science world can plan against magic? Don’t tell me there’s a magician hidden among you guys?”

“…..”

“……”

Both sides remained silent. The tension was like thin yet sharp threads that were tied all over the place, as if they would break when there was even the slightest movement, like breathing. But there was no sign of anxiety, and one might even think that they were enjoying it.

Like she just snapped those taut strings with a ‘Pow’ sound, Laura started to speak in a cheery tone.

“Let’s not do these useless limitations, time is really precious.”

She shook her head, and the hair that extended onto the floor like a rug started to shake slightly.

“The biggest problem is that the deal involving the ‘Stab Sword’ is in Academy City.”

“The enemy should also be clear about this. Letting Anglican magicians into our territory…we can’t possibly make that exception.”

If they gave an exception to the Anglican Church and allowed them in, other groups would request to ‘give them the permit’. Not all the people were well-intentioned. Among them, some might even sneak into Academy City and do all sorts of sabotage work.

The original circumstances were already quite troublesome. If they were to add more fire-starters to the mix, nobody could know how it would develop. Especially since it was Daihaseisai now, with so many civilians and the media around, Aleister wanted to prevent any chaos from taking place, let alone a tragedy.

A similar situation had happened when an alchemist took over ‘Misawa Cram School’. At that time, Academy City hired the Anglican Church and the Roman Catholic Church to stop Aureolus Izzard from going out of control.

But the circumstances were different now.

It was Daihaseisai now, there were many civilians from ‘outside’ Academy City. If Aleister were to propose that ‘we’ll decide who’ll settle the problem that happens in our city’, and the other party proposed that ‘there are tourists from our country, so we’ll protect our citizens’, it would create lots and lots of chaos.

Of course, there was a difference in power among these organizations.

Academy City, as the leader of the science world, had a base difference in ability compared to many small forces of the magical world. So there would be differences in the influence, but they couldn’t suppress the other party just like that.

Once they rejected the proposal from the small groups of the magic world, larger groups would come up with excuses to go with their requests. Even if they could

reject their suggestions, other large groups would speak up. As this continued, the problem would snowball, ending up with the magic side facing off against the science side.

Daihaseisai was already an event that the world was watching out for.

It probably wouldn’t even take a day for the problem to develop.

“Even so, if any resident of Academy City is to beat a magician, it’ll cause a problem as well.”

Both the science and magic sides had their own interests and responsibilities. If the security forces of Academy City weren't careful when they captured the magicians, it would create a risk of unauthorized access to the other side.

“Those guys really thought of everything. Even if we are to sense that something is amiss, we can’t just go and attack the enemy without expecting any reservations. With this, they can just focus on the deal.”

“But what if we give up now? Wouldn’t we have nothing on them?”

Laura stood up.

The overly long hair of hers wouldn’t leave the floor just like that.

The set of gold and silver combs on her lap fell onto the ground.

However, Laura never even bothered looking at them.

“Since you are hosting ordinary civilians, I assume there’s no problem if people from our side are to go in on a holiday, right?”

Hearing her serious tone, the man on the monitor screen chuckled,

“Let’s see…even if we disguise it as a holiday tour, if all the members are from the Anglican Church, we’ll have a headache. Once anyone finds out that it’s a planned action by some organization, we’ll have to accept the rumor that ‘the Church has already invaded Academy City’. But if we limit it to a single person…and that person happens to have friendly relations with some residents of Academy City, we might be able to confuse them.”

Aleister happily whistled, and quipped,

“……O, so now, we’ll just have to use that boy as a guide then.”

Part 2

It was 10:30 AM

The opening ceremony was finally over.

“It’s too hot……”

Ordinary high school student Kamijou Touma stood on the football field. This seemed to be a facility affiliated to a sports school that was dedicated to social activities. Even the turf that was made of artificial resin was about to melt in this unrelenting summer. The students, who were dressed in various PE attires, dispersed in groups of twos and threes the moment they stepped past the exits.

There were 1.8 million participants in Daihaseisai. Although the stadium was of professional standard, it couldn’t possibly contain every single person.

“……Aren’t there too many principals in the city?”

Kamijou tiredly said. One would definitely be irritated after hearing so many consecutive ‘principal messages’ in this hot summer. Kamijou, who for some reason had lost his memories, accidentally and unknowingly experienced this for the second time.

Actually, the board of directors had already carefully chosen who the speakers were. If all the principals were to go on stage and deliver their messages, it would probably take an entire day.

Around Kamijou, there were students from primary, junior high, high school and

college students. Everyone's expression was the same as his. They were basically wearing short-sleeved shirts and shorts. Because they were of different schools, some of them were wearing shoe covers or track attire. Some students from special schools even put on aikido clothing, camouflage pants, or armored suits (non-driven) that were made from special materials.

The common thing among the students was that they were wearing red or white sashes on their heads.

Basically, Daihaseisai was an inter-school competition where the number of wins and losses were computed as points. Each school divided its own students into a red team and a white team, and with the number of wins each colored team got, the points earned would be added on to the school's score. Red vs white, school vs school. They would use the final total score to decide the rankings of the school.

The victory condition that Kamijou and Mikoto were arguing about before the start of the opening ceremony used this system. In Academy City, once a school's ranking was higher than another, it 'won'. The relentless words that Mikoto had left behind were something like, "You…you just wait and see……! I'll make you regret saying that the loser has to play a penalty game and obey the winner!"

"……What will she do to me……? Wait…wait a minute. Don't tell me she's going to play railgun catching with me (with me being the catcher) until the sun sets? I don't want to play this sort of catching game with her……!!"

Kamijou couldn't help but shout out alone. All the students near the exit of the sports hall give him a weird look. After he finally regained his composure, Kamijou quietly left the bus stop in front of the sports hall.

(But I'm too over-worried as well.)

Up till now, although Kamijou was shivering from fear due to anticipation of what was to come, he understood that he would be alright if he didn't lose. Though the opponent was a prestigious school, she was still a junior high school student. Even if esper powers were allowed in the competition, this should be an extension of sports activities (probably). To be honest, Kamijou felt that those missies who were supposed to be so cosseted couldn't possibly win against a youthful and sweaty group of high school students. Even if Kamijou was to lose

in a direct match-up against Tokiwadai, there were other ways. Once Kamijou's school beats other schools, and Tokiwadai lost to others, the difference could be whittled down.

"Touma!"

A girl's voice came from beside him.

Looking in the direction of where the voice came from, among the crowd that was wearing PE attire, stood a girl in a white nun's habit that were decorated with gold embroidery. Her name was Index. She was an English girl with long white hair, green pupils, and a slim body. She was also the one with perfect memory of the 103,000 grimoires in her mind. To be honest, she was a girl who was a lot more useful than those weak espers.

Index carried a calico cat in front of her, saying listlessly,

"Touma…I'm hungry."

"You're hungry now? It's still morning, you know. Didn't you eat breakfast two hours ago?"

"Uuuu. But I can smell such an attractive and indescribable smell all over the place. I can't stand it."

The calico cat in her arms shook its nose and made a happy sound, matching Index's voice.

Although it was a large-scale sporting event, not all the students would be bounded by the events all the time. They just need to follow the rule of reaching the area in the specific time, and any time other than that was free time for them. Whether it was cheering for other schools, buying gifts with family members, or just standing at a convenience store to read magazines, anything was fine. Some would even set up stores to get some earnings, like the management or home economics schools that Tsuchimikado Maika was studying at.

The number of schools where all the students were participating in the competitions was unexpectedly low. As the academic years and the athletic events were different, there would normally be people with nothing to do. One should be cheering for his own school, but the victory banquet could be much

more luxurious if their stores could earn some money. Just selling things to 1.8 million students and parents could earn them quite a large sum of money.

“Ah……erm……maybe Japanese cuisine is as tempting to eat as it sounds.”

The nun carrying the calico cat blurted out.

Index was the type of person that would do anything to get any food that was in front of her. Although it was just an aroma from afar, one's saliva would flow out if under this condition for a long time. Besides, he should reward her for not raiding those stores, Kamijou thought seriously.

“Ah, I see. You have nothing to do for the entire day, so I’ll find time to go out with you later.”

Index nodded her head, before she stopped and asked,

“……Later?”

“Ah, the first match is about to start, I got to go. You can take a look at the travel guide. The locations that I marked out with a pen are the spectator stands of the events that I’m taking part in.”

“Wa–Wawawa! To–Touma is so cold to me today!”

Index seemed to be shouting something, but Kamijou didn’t have much time left. He wanted to let her go to a few shops, but it would be endless if he went out with Index, who was hungry right now. She wouldn’t be satisfied without going to every single store and eating everything.

Kamijou haggled with Maika, who just so happened to pass by, before buying a maid bento at half price (the fixed price was 1,200 yen, so expensive). Index kept on crying, saying that she wanted to ‘eat’ as she begged Kamijou while on her way to the arena. On a side note, although the name maid bento sounded very Western, the ingredients were all from Japan. While Kamijou was grumbling about the ingredients and the price, Maika explained,

“Because Japan is the land of bentos, as other countries don’t use bentos as a culture. England uses ‘lunch’ to describe a midday meal, and in Western culture, people normally carry biscuits with them anyway. This is why we’re using local

ingredients. Although you're saying that it's expensive, they're selling those high class bentos that are ten times more expensive than udon in theatres to the audience. We are following the traditional methods by using top-grade ingredients and techniques to create these Daihaseisai bentos, you know."

Although it sounded arrogant, she did have a point.

Holding the maid bento in his hand, Kamijou headed toward the competition arena, which was the school field at his high school. He was supposed to send Index into the spectator stands, but the entrances for the competitors were different from the spectators. After separating from the girl, he entered the competitors area. The field was currently undergoing preparation, as the staff was spraying water onto the field to prevent dust from flying about.

There were remote-controlled hot air balloons in the blue sky, hanging a special vertical thin screen showing these running words: '7th district. High school sector. First event, the **Wrench Pole Competition**. 10 minutes and 23 seconds to the start of the match.'

(If our school loses to Tokiwadai in terms of ranking, who knows what Mikoto will come up with for the penalty game. We got to win right at the start!)

During Daihaseisai, which lasted for 7 days, how many points the schools got would largely depend on how they paced themselves. It all depended on the tactic that the school used, do they pull away from the beginning, or do they conserve their forces and catch up with the tired teams at the end. There were plenty of options.

Because of his memory loss, Kamijou felt that this was the first time he was in a Daihaseisai competition.

However, since he was not a student from a sports school, Kamijou was unable to observe the battles calmly and save his physical strength. Though he had a special ability, it was still a battle between students. The results of the match may affect morale as well. In other words, although it was possible to win the match, if the difference was too great, they wouldn't be able to focus on turning the situation around when they had already given up.

Based on this reason alone, Kamijou favored getting off right from the start and pulling away from the opponent.

(Come to think about it, our class was very noisy a while back when we were preparing for the match. Or should I say, the entire school was like this. Hm, those people should be rather energetic. There are quite a few people who hate to lose, and I'm more worried about them using underhanded means to win.)

Kamijou looked forward to this meaningless gathering with his classmates, as he walked into the competitors' lounge inside the school to meet up with them.

Normally, Aogami Pierce, the one who liked fun the most, would then turn his head around,

"Wa—why so energetic……"

Kamijou inadvertently fell onto the ground.

When he regained consciousness, he was sprawled on the ground.

He looked around and observed that the other students were also like this. Everyone looked that they had gotten heatstroke.

"Wait…wait a minute, what's wrong with everyone? Why is everyone so tired before the first match has even begun?"

Kamijou trembled somewhat angrily as he asked, as Aogami Pierce forcefully turned around and said,

"Why? Because everyone stayed up all night yesterday playing! And before the opening ceremony, the whole class was fighting over what kind of tactics need to be used. That remaining amount of energy is all used up!"

"Because of this!? Everyone!? Did the beginning and end of Daihaseisai switch over? However, Himegami, congratulations! Seeing you being able to mix into the class, I'm very relieved."

Himegami Aisa was standing slightly far away from Kamijou. The white-skinned, black haired girl had the ability to attract and kill vampires. To prevent this power from working, she wore a Cross on her neck, which was now hidden under her short-sleeved PE shirt.

She had just transferred into Kamijou's class in the beginning of the month.

Himegami gently shook her long, black hair, which was becoming increasing rare, saying,

"Isn't a student's competition something like this? Where there's trainers and coaches."

"Ugh, even you said 'isn't it like this!?'"

Seems like we'll lose! Kamijou cupped his hands on his head.

As if he was trying to encourage Kamijou,

"Nya! Kami-yan, it can't be helped that everyone is so tired. Nobody expected the opening ceremony to consist of 15 consecutive principal talks, together with more than 50 congratulatory telegrams that were sent over. I have to praise you for being able to stand even after all these……"

The person who said this was Tsuchimikado Motoharu—he looked like a student, but was actually a double agent for both the magic and science side—his short, blond hair spiking outwards, with light-colored sunglasses on his eyes and gold jewelry on his neck. One could only say that a short-sleeved PE shirt didn't match the other decorations.

"Eve–Even the energetic Aogami and Tsuchimikado are like this…wait…wait a minute, if the opponent is as lifeless, we might have a chance……!!"

Kamijou grabbed onto his last glimmer of hope.

"It's impossible nya, Kami-yan. The opponent seems to be a private elite sports school, you know."

WAAAAA! Kamijou was completely sprawled on the floor. The thought of him losing to Misaka Mikoto and her giving a hellish punishment was now clear in his mind. Just when Kamijou felt his skin crawl, a female classmate, who was late, came into the room.

"Wait…wait a minute, what's wrong with everyone? Why is everyone so tired?"

Hgn? Kamijou, who was lying on the floor, looked up.

The girl in front of him was wearing a short shirt and a pair of shorts, and also a hoody on the outside. The armband on her arm had the words ‘Daihaseisai Management Committee, High School Division.’ There should be similar words written on the back. She was rather tall in class and had a nice body. One could see those compassionate breasts of hers under her PE attire. Her long black hair was kept behind her ears, making her forehead look much larger.

Fukiyose Seiri.

In contrast to her beautiful looks, her nickname was the ‘iron wall girl.’

She blankly looked around, before her vision finally fixed onto Kamijou, who was on the ground.

“Ah!? No way, Kamijou! It’s because of your lethargy that everyone else in infected by it. You……what are you going to do with this?”

“Eh? No……it’s not my fault! I only just reached here, you know!”

“In other words, because you’re late, everyone lost their drive?”

“Do you have to blame me no matter what? Aren’t you late as well?”

“I’m late because I have management work to do, idiot!”

You were planning to make me look like an idiot no matter what? Kamijou was really going to cry out,

“Don’t bother me! I can’t make it! Now that Kamijou’s in an unfortunate reality, Kamijou really can’t stand up now!!”

“You really look bad like this. This isn’t a psychological problem; it’s mild anaemia because you didn’t eat breakfast. Just drink some isotonic drinks to replenish your water content and minerals and you’ll be fine. Kamijou Touma, stand up now!”

Whoosh! Several 500ml plastic bottles flew out from Fukiyose’s jacket pockets.

“Wa! Why are you spouting this nonsense that a health freak will go crazy about!? Also, is this an illusion? Why do I feel that you don’t lack minerals and water, but calcium?”

“What are you talking about? I’ve taken in enough anchovies!”

Fukiyose glared at Kamijou, saying,

“I hate those who use misfortune as an excuse to live life so sloppily. Once you look so lethargic, everyone else will lose their motivation as well. So you better buck up for everyone’s sake.”

Facing off against Fukiyose Seiri’s aggressive attack, Kamijou inadvertently backed up. The committee member continued to get near the retreating boy. Kamijou still wanted to back away, only to back into the flowerbed.

Seeing this, the students looked absolutely delighted.

“Too……too strong. Fukiyose, you’re too strong! You’re really the woman who can defend against that Kamijou!”

“If it was an ordinary person, that person might end up being soft-hearted and say ‘Ka–Kamijou-san, are you alright?’”

“This guy keeps saying that he’s unlucky, but he always gets the best seats!!”

“Oh, you’re the hope of humanity. Let’s analyze Fukiyose Seiri, and maybe we can control Kami-yan!!”

(In your eyes, what kind of scum am I!?)

Kamijou listlessly backed up.

At that moment,

Kamijou’s foot stepped on something squishy. It was the rubber gardening hose. They had to spray water onto the grounds before the competition started in order to prevent the dust from flying about (though they couldn’t prevent it completely).

Looking far away, a male teacher working in the school suspiciously looked at the water hose that had stopped spraying water.

At that instant,

The water that had been suppressed by Kamijou's foot blasted out from the loose connection of the hose to the faucet, splashing water nearby.

The one closest to the faucet was……

"Fu…Fukiyose!? Kamijou, you bastard, how dare you do this to our final stronghold!!"

"Oh no, with Kamijou around, even that tigress is all wet now."

"And unexpectedly, we get to see her colorful underwear. Don't tell me this is the start of a love comedy……"

"This is the despair of humanity—if Fukiyose can't survive, then who will?"

(In your eyes, what kind of scum am I!? Also, sorry, Fukiyose-san!)

Kamijou repeatedly did his angry and apologetic mannerisms.

On a side note, Fukiyose was all wet and her sports attire clung tightly to her. Her skin, and even her underwear could be seen clearly. Unexpectedly, she was wearing underwear that was completely different from her image; the yellow and orange checkered design looked really cute.

"……Do you have any dissatisfaction?"

(No, I don't dare to!!)

Kamijou quickly lowered his head and apologized. Fukiyose gave a 'humph,' turned her head, pulled the zip of her jacket open and pulled out a small packet of milk before drinking it. She probably wanted the calcium to pacify her own anger.

The boys nearby covered the mouth of the faucet with their thumbs, and started playing with the columns of water that were shooting out like a laser cannon. In

truth, they were tired now. But they seemed to be aware of Fukiyose being wet throughout and wanted to display the spirit of a gentleman, so they pretended that they didn't notice her. They looked innocent, but their eyes weren't smiling as they continued to play this water spraying game in despair.

Kamijou blankly looked at his classmates that completely lacked unity and thought,

(Nobody's worrying about the Wrench Pole Competition!? We're doomed! To many extents, this class really has a lot of problems.)

Just when Kamijou was shaking his head at the wall near the competitors' corner entrance, he heard a man and a woman arguing. Seemed like some people were arguing behind the sports hall.

"This will…definitely—"

"……What nonsense—definitely……huh?"

What was going on now……? Kamijou kept his body near the sports hall as he peeked in.

The person in the back of the dark sports hall was Kamijou's homeroom teacher, Tsukuyomi Komoe. She was 135cm tall, a teacher who wouldn't be mocked even if she was carrying a primary school student's backpack. She was wearing a short white dress, accompanied with a light green sleeveless vest. Seemed like she was wearing this to cheer them on.

Facing her was a man that Kamijou had never met before. He should be a teacher from another school. In Daihaseisai, while staff members were wearing sports attire that could be bought outside, this guy was wearing business clothing on such a hot day.

Komoe-sensei was arguing with that teacher.

Or more accurately, it looked like the male teacher, who was mocking Komoe-sensei, was about to get eaten by her.

"I admit that our school facilities and teaching contents aren't adequate! But that's our fault and not the students'!"

Komoe-sensei was waving her arms as she shouted. The male teacher however didn't mind, saying,

"Humph, isn't the inadequacy of the facilities due to your students not being capable? If there were results, the board of directors would have given extra funding, right? Hoho. Trash schools like yours shouldn't be able to request it, right? Ah, sensei, I heard that your class did badly for the end-of semester test, right? Managing so many failures must be tough."

"The–There's no success or failure for students! They just have their own personalities. Everyone is already working so hard! How……how can I abandon them for my own sake?"

"Is this an excuse to hide your own inability? Hahaha. Your dreams are too far-reaching. Do you need me to send you back to reality? Let the elites that I groomed beat your trash into a pulp. Hm, we're having a Wrench Pole Competition here, right? As a member of the opposing school, let me give you an advice. Go do some warm-ups; you'll need it to avoid injuries."

"You……"

"You embarrassed me the last time we had the school meet, so this time, in front of the global telecast, I'll return this debt back to you. We'll be slightly lax in our attacks, but I don't know if your failures are too weak."

Hahaha—the male teacher laughed as he left.

That teacher should be from the opposing school was what Kamijou thought. To be honest, for Kamijou, who was Level 0, even if he was called a failure or trash, it didn't hurt him too much.

"……It's not like this."

At this moment, Komoe-sensei spoke.

She was alone now, and she was not talking to anyone in particular.

She lowered her head and said in a trembling voice,

"They aren't some trash, are they……?"

Her already small and skinny shoulders shrank even more.

It was like she was saying that it was all because of her that her students were shamed by outsiders.

She raised her head, looked up at the sky, and remained silent, as if she was trying to endure something.

“……”

Kamijou remained silent.

He turned around.

All the students were standing there silently.

As if he was trying to confirm it, Kamijou Touma asked,

“Okay, you guys heard that? Just now, everyone was complaining about how they have no motivation, their energy is used up……”

Kamijou closed one eye.

“—Let me ask you guys again, are you sure that you don’t want to win?”

Part 3

Misaka Mikoto was in the spectator stands reserved for students.

Compared to ordinary spectator stands, there was not even a roof to block the sun. There was only a blue plastic sheet on the ground, no chairs at all. Mikoto sighed as she thought: this was like a banquet for them to enjoy watching the flowers. It was so primitive, yet it gave a wild sense of freshness.

Considering that she was going to participate in a match, observing Kamijou's match until the end would be somewhat dangerous. But she was really anxious, and before she knew it, she was already standing there.

There were no other students there wearing the standard Tokiwadai PE attire.

(Although he can't possibly beat our school……)

Mikoto sighed stealthily. Tokiwadai Middle School comprised of two Level 5s, forty-seven Level 4s, and the rest were all Level 3s; a strong school comprising of elites. Although they were ranked a rather humiliating 2nd in last year's Daihaseisai, last year's champion was a top 5 school, Nagatenjouki Academy. In the end, the ones really fighting for the championship were these 'top 5' schools. If the situation changed, it would only be a reshuffling in positions among these top 5 schools.

This should be something that every resident of Academy City knows, so why did that guy so recklessly bet on it? Mikoto was skeptical. But that idiot probably didn't have any special plan.

(But……)

If it was him, maybe an unexpected winner would be born.

He would disregard any objective views between Level 0s and Level 5s. Yes, just like how he beat the strongest Level 5 in Academy City with his right hand.

At that time, he gritted his teeth and stood up for her so many times.

(……)

Mikoto's mind temporarily went blank.

(Ahhh, this is so irritating, why am I so embarrassed all of a sudden!?)

Patapatapata!! She pulled out the board under her that she had been using as a seat, and hurriedly used it to fan her face that was flushed red. I'm lucky that my schoolmates aren't here, Mikoto thought as she looked around.

Then,

A nun with silver hair and green eyes was lying on the ground.

“!?”

Mikoto’s shoulders jerked. This was the girl who was with that idiot ever since school started. Seemed like she was called Index — was that a nickname? It was hard to imagine anyone having that kind of name. Why was she here? Mikoto had a few questions, but she immediately realized that the girl should be here to cheer for the opponent.

The girl was holding onto a pair of chopsticks in her right hand and there was an empty bento box placed nearby. Seemed like it was the student bento that Tsuchimikado Maika was selling.

The girl, who was prostrating herself on the ground, slowly said,

"……I…I'm hungry……"

"Didn't you just finish the bento?"

Mikoto instinctively shouted back. She immediately thought that the reason why she was so listless was not because she was hungry, but because she got heatstroke, so she gave her a plastic bottle containing isotonic drink that was conveniently placed on the plastic sheet.

The girl immediately stood up. The moment she said "Tha…thank you." the bottle was empty, and her stomach was rumbling. After that, she became as listless as before.

"……Try…trying to use a drink to suppress my hunger may be a bit too much……"

"You're just hungry, aren't you……"

Mikoto placed her hand on her forehead and sighed.

A calico cat climbed out from the gap between the stomach of the girl, who was lying on the ground. It seemed to be saying, "Missy, on behalf of this girl, I'd like to say sorry for bothering you. Ah, I'm melting, my paws are burning. Hm?.....What kind of strange feeling is this?" as it looked around uneasily.

Mikoto's ability was dubbed the railgun, as she could control and manipulate electricity. Even if she didn't move, there would be a weak electric field, so animals normally wouldn't like to approach her.

She looked at the lethargic nun that was dressed in white robes, and said,

"Oi, did you meet that guy today? Did you find anything strange about him?"

“Hm? That guy? Are you referring to Touma? Touma doesn’t seem any different from usual.”

You’re with that guy all the time? Mikoto really wanted to snap at her, but decided to endure it. If that guy wasn’t any different from usual, then was he not too bothered about winning and losing?

(So this means that our school should still win in the end…eh? If I win, what will happen?)

Mikoto thought, before shaking her head forcefully. The girl lying on the ground was slightly surprised upon seeing Mikoto act like this.

“Oi, short-hair.”

“……Oi, you’re too much. Is this how you treat someone who gave you a drink?”

“Oi, short-hair with a big belly.”

“There isn't a girl who’d be happy upon hearing that!!”

Mikoto twitched her eyebrows as she said that. The nun, however, did not mind as she said,

“What’s short-hair doing here?”

“What? Do–doing? No, I didn’t……”

“Are you here to cheer for Touma?”

“Wha–what? Stu–stupid, what are you saying? Why should I cheer for that guy?”

The white nun did not press on any further as Mikoto continued to fan herself even harder.

At this moment, the school’s speakers broadcast the signal that the competitors were coming in.

The first match was the ‘Wrench Pole Competition’—this was a match where

both sides were to set up 7m long poles. While defending their own pole, competitors had to push down the enemy's pole. This was what the competition involves.

The one presenting and explaining the rules was a first-year from high school, as his voice loudly blared through the speakers.

Although there were broadcasting crews from many different companies, it was still basically a school Olympics. The television commentators would be working in different rooms, so there didn't seem to be any major changes. However, just the fact that 'they would be shown on television' created a huge difference in the atmosphere and sense of being as compared to before.

Although in reality, while it was impossible to show all 1.8 million students, they would still be nervous.

Though the students were noisily chattering about, Mikoto inexplicably felt a sense of nervousness. In this moment, one could really feel that this was a formal activity being watched by the entire world.

"I…I'm hungry……"

The girl who was sprawling on the ground broke the tension in the air mercilessly. Mikoto saw that she was so pitiful, and pulled out some biscuit-shaped supplementary food (chocolate flavor) from her pocket. The lethargic girl could only raise her head and open her small mouth. Mikoto stuffed the food into Index's mouth, so all Index could do was eat them obediently.

(Never mind, those guys likely won't feel nervous……they might even skip this and pretend that they didn't know this match is about to occur.)

Mikoto looked like she was prompted by the broadcast to look to the school compound. The opponent that Kamijou's school was facing seemed to be some elite school that focused heavily on sports, as even their warm ups gave people a sense of professionalism. By moderating a suitable amount of nervousness into a motivated look, it seemed like they were focused on a real competition. They were gathered in their own classes, as each class was setting up their own poles. It would be disastrous if the opponent was serious, Mikoto thought, shaking her head as she looked at where Kamijou was. Just as the guide booklet showed, his school did not have any special characteristics, widely considered as a 'really

ordinary school.’

But standing there…were the real warriors.

Eh? Mikoto couldn’t help but wonder if she was seeing the wrong thing.

The entire group gave off an inexplicable sense of seriousness, nobody was playing around.

With Kamijou Touma as the center, they were lined up horizontally in one line. Forget about calling it a Wrench Pole Competition, the intense atmosphere was like the prelude to a battle in the Sengoku Era. The poles that had been set up seemed to resemble a large spear held by a regiment. The tension was a whole lot different from the one the broadcasting companies brought. It felt like there was no one besides them and their enemies.

DONG KAKAKA! They were surrounded by some weird sound effects.

The sound was caused by the aftershocks caused by the power of the three units of espers colliding with each other, causing the air to vibrate.

(Eh……)

Seeing such an intense atmosphere, Mikoto shouted out.

(……What’s with that sense of realization!? That guy, to think that he is able to display this kind of leadership capability at a time like this. Don–don’t tell me that they’re serious about winning!? What will that guy want if he wins?)

Actually, this was due to Komoe-sensei’s story being spread across the entire school, but of course, Mikoto didn’t know this.

In front of Mikoto, who was all pale green now, the announcement that the match was starting was made. Kamijou and company raised some dust into the air as they charged towards their opponents, who were scared upon seeing their display of momentum.

Part 4

The people taking part in the Wrench Pole Competition were split into two groups.

One group set up its own pole, making it stable and protecting it.

The other group was to knock down the enemy's pole.

Kamijou was in the latter group.

So once the signal to start was given, he led the charge into the enemy's territory.

"YYYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!"

Kamijou shouted as he charged forward.

Any ordinary person would think…that this was a game included in this sporting event, but in Academy City, more than half of the students were people who had discovered their powers, called espers. There were abilities that may include fire, water, earth, wind, lightning, ice, and many more, even including some that allowed espers to fly. In a battle of around 100 espers fighting, the tense atmosphere was no trivial matter.

Right now, the distance between the two bases was around 80 meters.

The opponent, lined up in a straight line, continuously fired some flashes over. They looked like the camera flashes from the spectator stands, but they were not.

These were long ranged attacks that were fired by the espers.

Seemed like an esper could detonate flames to create explosive pressure. In order to keep the pressure shaped in the form of a bullet, the flame bombs were covered with an invisible forcefield created by an esper who could manipulate pressure. When the bomb bullet was created, the bullet would increase the refractivity of air, reflecting sunlight like sunlight shining through a transparent balloon.

It was only in Daihaseisai that one got to see many espers work together to form a single attack.

Kamijou theorized that they would remove the pressure-type shell, releasing the internal pressure and release it to the surroundings.

Facing the attack of these units, Kamijou's allies, who were behind him and protecting him, fired sand guns at the enemy. This was a telekinesis-based attack, and it was not an exaggeration to call it a formless and colorless attack. It reacted with the dust floating in the air and manipulated the flow of the magnetic field lines to create sand-iron guns.

The explosive bullets and the telekinetic guns collided and exploded in the middle of the field.

Seeing the storm that just occurred, the spectators started to scream as if they were riding on a roller coaster.

(Those that are watching probably think that this is interesting!!)

Kamijou's movements were somewhat slow because of the explosions, as he continued to run forward.

The opposing school seemed to be a specialist in sports, as one could see that they devoted a considerable amount of effort to develop their capabilities. Although their hit damage was a lot less as compared to people like Railgun and Accelerator…scary things were still scary.

Kamijou's right hand had the Imagine Breaker ability. No matter whether it was magic, esper power or even miracles, the Imagine Breaker on his right hand was an extraordinary power that negated them all once it touched these other powers… However, it was limited only to his right hand. It was impossible to defend against attacks from all directions.

As Kamijou thought while he was running to the enemy's base, someone was running beside him.

Aogami Pierce.

“I’ll go first, Kami-yan. Watch how this comedian crushes the irritating aura of those corrupted elites! WAHAHAHAHA!!”

The intercepting squad continued to fire several bullets, and Aogami Pierce continued to dodge them leisurely by spinning around like a ballet dancer.

There was still 20 meters before the two sides clashed. In this situation where one shouldn’t be caring about others, Kamijou was still surprised as he continued to run with Aogami Pierce, saying,

“Come to think about it, why are you so happy?”

“Ah!? Kami-yan, it’s all because of love. This faint sense of love that a hard-working girl is conveying to me through her sweat and tears, mixed with some sexual addiction, is being broadcast on national TV…no, it’s being broadcast in many countries! Even if I faced with this great love that’s so unscrupulous, even if I can’t accept it, I’ll blaze a path to the temples!”

Ah ha ah ha ah ha—!! Aogami Pierce’s actions became even faster with his rising emotions.

“So I ask…is that bald muscled guy among your admirers? That guy seems to of been looking at you since a while ago, calling you out lovingly, you know.”

“What are you talking about—
GYYYAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHH!?”

Hearing Kamijou’s cold remark, Aogami Pierce was stunned upon realizing the true identity of the person that was showing him love. He got hit by several pressure bullets and flew backwards. Kamijou looked back, completely taken aback. Aogami Pierce was caught by an ally using an invisible forcefield.

On the spectator stands, ordinary civilians were roaring with cheers and applause.

(Ah, we’ll be flung far away if we’re hit. I don’t want to be acting in this scary filler! Come to think about it, what’s with that ‘This is how Daihaseisai should be like!’ atmosphere?)

Kamijou looked away from Aogami Pierce, who was behind him, and looked

forward.

The enemy's base was just ahead.

There was still 10 meters until they clashed.

Kamijou Touma sneakily clenched his right fist…

And charged into the enemy's base.

Part 5

In conclusion, Kamijou and company won the battle.

They understood right from the start that they would lose in a frontal battle. So when the two sides collided, they used all their powers on the ground, whipping up dust, blurring the enemy's vision and using lightning fast guerrilla tactics. Before this, the staff had sprayed some water onto the field to prevent dust from flying about, but it was impossible to prevent dust from flying up when the ground was attacked so many times.

The one who had suggested this tactic, Fukiyose Seiri, held the front of her jacket in place as she grouped the students into 'those who are to raise the dust,' 'those who are to knock down the wooden pole when the dust is up' and 'the telepathy group who can give the order to raise the dust and order those in the dust to retreat,' as she held overall command.

During the battle, as the telepathic messages could not be received in the midst of the dust storm, not only was Kamijou hit by the bullets from his own teammates, he was beaten to a pulp by the opponent, but they still won.

The warriors who were covered with bruises and injuries completely forgot

about their victory and injuries as they walked out of the arena from the entrance and into the school compound. Komoe-sensei, who was about to cry, was waiting for them with some first aid boxes.

“Why…why must everyone force themselves to work so hard!? There’s no point in having Daihaseisai if everyone’s not having fun! It’s not important whether we win or lose! Sen…sensei is very unhappy that everyone’s so injured……!!”

Facing Komoe-sensei’s cries, the students seemed to agree that they shouldn’t explain their reasons to her, and scattered away in groups. After walking out of the competitors’ rest area, Kamijou started to look for Index in the spectator stands.

Index should be in the spectators stand reserved for students.

Normally, this was an area forbidden to anyone other than students, but Kamijou didn’t dare put Index in the normal spectator stands. She was someone from outside Academy City with the knowledge of 103,000 grimoires in her head, and was thus much more valuable than any Academy City resident.

“Index? Eh, where did she go?”

Kamijou looked at the spectator stand where she should be, but couldn’t find her. Although it was called a spectator stand, it was actually just a blue plastic sheet laid on the school grounds, and there was nothing to block the sunlight… together with the people gathering nearby. The students nearby formed a human wall, so it was quite difficult to look around.

Kamijou got into the crowd, moving from one end to another, but in the end, he still couldn’t find her.

(Hm……it should have been easy to spot her when she’s wearing such a noticeable white nun's habit.)

He stuffed his hands into his PE shorts, looking at the school compound that was slightly farther away.

(I gave Index a zero-yen phone before, and it should be the fastest way to contact her. Too bad my phone is in the classroom.)

Kamijou had never seen Index use a cell phone before. Although he was worried, Kamijou felt that it was the best way given to the current situation.

During Daihaseisai, many schools prohibited people from entering the school premises. They couldn't allow others to see the facilities that were related to power development. The only exception was for their own students, like Kamijou. In case anyone got injured, the school's doctor was available in the healthcare room, and the shower room was opened.

So, Kamijou walked up the stairs.

There were two Anti-Skill members wearing black uniforms at the shoe closet. The teachers, who normally taught history and mathematics in front of the blackboard, were carrying guns, and the sight was somewhat strange.

"Ah, I'm looking for someone who's lost in the crowd, can I grab my handphone in the classroom?"

"Kamijou, your reason is too direct. If you can't contact the person due to electromagnetic wave interference, tell us when you need to use the P.A system. So now, let's wish you a good time in Daihaseisai."

The mathematics teacher seemed to find it troublesome as she replied. However, she did mention the necessary points, as expected of a trained professional.

He got past the Anti-Skill members and walked towards the staircase. After putting on his slippers at the shoe cabinet, he walked up the stairs. It was really quiet when no one was in school—the moment he thought of this, the speakers started to blare a loud echo, and it was really noisy.

He walked up the stairs. After walking for a while, he reached his own class. As he pulled the door aside, Kamijou thought

(Himegami seemed to have blended well into our class, that's good. Oh yeah, I have to contact Index the moment I get the phone. If Himegami is free, it'd be nice if she could come along with us as well—)

However, he immediately froze on the spot.

For some reason, Management Committee member Fukiyose Seiri had taken off her clothes.

Before he opened the door, he hadn't noticed that the curtains of the windows were pulled down. In the dark classroom, Fukiyose Seiri, who was sitting on the table opposite Kamijou, was wearing only a pair of panties. Just a pair of panties, she was not even wearing her bra. She seemed to be changing her clothes that were wet due to the water that burst from the water hose. Even her panties seemed to be new, as the plastic bag near her feet contained her wet clothes and undergarments. The other set of clothes seemed to be placed in a sports bag.

Fukiyose Seiri looked at the intruder calmly.

She remained emotionless as she reached out toward a nearby chair.

Kamijou's shoulders jerked.

"Wait…wait a minute, Fukiyose-san! I came here to get my handphone so that I can find someone. There's no malicious intent here!! Also, please read the instructions on how to use a chair before using it! I'll be dead if I get hit by that!!"

Kamijou got down and started begging in 0.2 seconds. Seeing the boy in front of her, Fukiyose felt bored as she sighed, and removed her hand from the chair. She took out some clothes from her sports bags beside her, and placed it over her naked body.

"Never mind. Please leave the classroom."

"……You're not angry?"

"It can't be helped, since you're looking for a missing person. You don't have to kneel down and beg, but to not turn your head around, Kamijou Touma!?"

Seeing the committee member putting on her coat, and that she only had a pair of panties on, one had to worry over whether she pulled up the zipper. Kamijou,

who was as shocked as her, didn't notice that Fukiyose Seiri's arms were trembling.

Yes Madam!! Like a retainer greeting a lord, Kamijou bent down and stepped backwards. Just when he was about to leave the classroom—

"……You're really not angry?"

"GET OUT!!"

Fukiyose grabbed the cardboard box on the table and flung it at Kamijou. Kamijou frantically ran out of the classroom and slammed the door shut with his backhand. He then sat in the corridor and took a deep breath.

(Ah—this is really frightening……)

Kamijou shook his head and looked down. At this moment, he saw a box on the corridor that was as big as a cigarette pack. Was this the box that Fukiyose threw? Kamijou took the box and examined it.

"Hot Hot Sheep-san, an infrared therapy device. To be attached below a handphone. Whether it's relieving stiff shoulders or stress relief, it's effective!!"

That was what was written on the box.

Seeing the exterior of the box, the design of the item seemed to be a lamb that could change shape. It should be of the same type of good as the frog lucky charm attached to Mikoto's bag.

"……So this is a decoration that's attached to a handphone. Relieves shoulder stiffness and fatigue, the number of uses is really little. To think there are people in this world who are attracted to this weird thing…eh? Isn't this something that the late night shopping channel would recommend?"

Because Index would be sleeping soundly in the room where the television was, Kamijou could only use the television function of his cell phone to watch late night shows.

On the other hand, Fukiyose, who was in the classroom, didn't seem to notice that Kamijou was sighing,

“Kamijou, did you put the handphone in the drawer?”

“Ah, isn’t my bag on the table? My handphone’s placed inside.”

“I’ll give it to you after I finish changing. Just wait there.”

“Thanks Fukiyose. I’ll exchange it with that weird purchase you threw over. I really couldn’t tell that you’re the type that uses mail-ordering.”

Hearing Kamijou say this, a frantic “WAH!?” sound could be heard in the classroom. Fukiyose seemed to realize now what she had just thrown out.

After a while, Fukiyose’s voice came from the classroom.

“This…there’s nothing wrong with that, right? Even if I carry a notebook as I watch the shopping channels, and read shopping magazines while rolling on the bed, what’s wrong with it!?”

“No…nothing. I’m not saying that this is bad, I’m just surprised.”

Although Fukiyose could really rebut, she seemed to be unable to answer when somebody else rebutted back. Kamijou was really trying hard to think of something to say that wouldn’t offend her, as Fukiyose continued to rant off inside the classroom like she was reading a tongue twister.

“Sowhat?SowhatevenifIhaveabunchofcreativeconditioningapparatus?
IalwaysfindthemusefulwhenIreadthemagazinesandyetIfindthemordinarywhenIgetthem.
DoesitmattertoyouwhetherIuseittwotothreetimesandstoppedusingthemafterwards?”

“So that’s what it’s like! I think you should calm down before picking up the phone, Seiri!”

Kamijou himself thought that this was advice that a classmate should give, but she continued on,

“It’sbecausetheserratedbottomofthefryingpanlookssoattractive.Theadvertisement saysthatitcanremove30%ofthefatifit’susedtocookmeat,
butit’ssounevenatthebottomthatIcan’tevencookafriedegg!!”

Hearing her tragic complaints, Kamijou decided not to rebut her.

He looked at the box of the lamb-shaped infrared decoration.

“Useful for shoulder aches, eh……”

“What’s so surprising about it? It isn’t so weird for me to get shoulder aches at this age, is it?”

“No, it’s not like that.”

Kamijou sat on the corridor and looked up at the ceiling.

“……The reason why your shoulders ache is probably because your breasts are too huge—OH C—!?”

At this moment, the sports bag broke the classroom door as it was flung out, together with his cell phone, hitting Kamijou directly. To be expected of the cordial and attentive committee member, Fukiyose Seiri.

Part 6

“Touma…eh, what’s wrong? Why do you look like you just cried?”

“It’s nothing……”

Facing the cute white nun who tilted her head slightly, Kamijou replied in a trembling voice. He thought, maybe it was better not to talk about the adventure he had while he was looking for her. In the end, because Index’s phone had run out of power (forget about charging, Index didn’t even know what a power source was), Kamijou had to look for her using her beautiful monastic robes.

He returned to the spectator stands reserved for students. Index got around the

crowd to get back to Kamijou, and for some reason, she was carrying the calico cat and a plastic bottle that used to contain isotonic drinks. The calico cat, being hugged together with the PET bottle, didn't seem to react as it gave a bored yawn, like it was saying, "Who said that cats are afraid of PET bottles? That's a superstition!"

"……This isn't important. I'm hungry, get me something to eat…Touma."

"Eh, what about the bento? Why do you look like a vengeful spirit that's thirsty for spiritual energy!?"

"The short-hair down there just now gave me a drink and some chocolate biscuits…but I'm not full……"

"You're not full!? You ate a bento and several other things, and you're still like this? Who's that short-hair you're talking about!! Ah, never mind, it doesn't matter who she is, but did you thank the person properly? Index!?"

Index did not react to Kamijou's shouting at all. It's said that girls have another stomach for sweet stuff, but it seemed like this girl in front of him had the ability to separate every single type of food into different stomachs.

Since she was not satisfied with just eating a bento, they had to go to the stores, Kamijou wildly thought. He flipped open the thick tourist guidebook that was kept with Index, and found that there was still a bit of time before the next event, 'Big Ball Rolling.'

"Alright, let's leave the spectator stands. If we go back to where the stores were just now, we'll still be able to find lots of food that can easily form a mountain when they're stacked up."

Upon hearing this, Index quickly turned her head around,

"As tall as a mountain!!"

"No…not really. Although the amount of food can form a mountain when they're stacked up, I don't have enough money to buy them all! Don't look at me with those glowing eyes! I'll feel guilty!!"

Kamijou sighed as he dug into his pockets, trying to confirm how much money

was in his wallet. There was still some money inside, but it was all he had for the entire Daihaseisai tournament, which lasted for 7 days. If he was to spend all of it on the first time, what awaited him would be tragedy.

Kamijou frustratedly thought of how to control Index, and decided to head toward the stores first. Index, who was beside him, started to daydream about the food haven that she hadn't even seen. Including her eyes, hair, skin, well basically, her entire body was glowing. The psychological theory that any mental activities will bring about physical effects to the human body seemed to be true.

Kamijou and Index walked toward a major road.

Seeing the traffic light turn red, they stopped moving. Basically during Daihaseisai, ordinary vehicles weren't allowed on the roads of Academy City, but business vehicles like buses, taxis and delivery trucks were allowed. Because of this, though there were so many people, they couldn't just turn Academy City into a walking haven.

Once they crossed the road, the stores would be right in front of their eyes. They could faintly smell sauce and soy sauce getting burned from opposite the road. When the traffic light turned green, Index started to shine so brightly that the shining index was at its highest of the year.

Khlap Khlap Khlap Khlap

Anti-Skill, who was maintaining the safety of Academy City, raised the 'No access' boards in front of them.

"Ah, I'm sorry. But there'll be many schools performing an ensemble parade here. We won't make it if we don't stop the crowd."

The Anti-Skill member was the woman who had taken care of him during the opening ceremony two weeks ago. She was a really beautiful teacher who tied her pitch-black hair behind her. Right now, she was not wearing an ordinary green track attire, but a black standard uniform. The reason she was not wearing a safety helmet was probably so that she wouldn't give a bad impression to the visitors. Kamijou thought, besides wearing a track attire or a standard uniform, wouldn't wearing decent clothing be much better?

During Daihaseisai, Academy City residents paid the most attention to providing

a good impression to the public. In other words, half the reason why they were organizing this event was to give a good impression to the general public.

In order to prevent any outsider access to any secret areas that involved the development of esper powers, the security in the research areas was very strict. Only an expert could rely on his skills to give a sense of seriousness ‘without ordinary people sensing it.’

The Anti-Skill nee-san also gave this sort of impression. Besides her putting on full gear and covering up all her skin, seeing a beauty’s face would likely give anyone a good impression.

Kamijou looked at the ‘No access’ signboard, then looked across the road, before asking,

“Excuse me, if I may ask, I want to get across the road; what’s the best way to do so?”

“Aiya, because this is a major parade, there’s no access along this road for 8 kilometers. You see here, it’s written in the tourist guidebook. Ugn—”

The Anti-Skill nee-san flipped open the guidebook, and said,

“There’s no overhead bridge nearby……so the nearest location is here? An underground street 3 kilometers from here. From exit U04 here to exit V01, you can get across here……”

3 kilometers……!? Kamijou was speechless.

Looking beside him, Index couldn’t withstand the hunger in her stomach, as she silently sat on the floor, giving a look that “I can’t walk for that far……”

Part 7

Misaka Mikoto was running down the streets.

She was not in the playing field, but on the crowded streets. Not only was there no prohibition for them to get on the road, there was no clearing of the roads.

Even so, Mikoto was in a match right now. Looking around, there were also several people running about on the trails nearby. The spectators were allowed to walk anywhere—in fact, this was the only competition where the spectators were required to be involved.

Borrowing Race.

The competitive area was Districts 7, 8, and 9 of Academy City. Of course, the competitors weren't allowed to use any forms of transportation like buses or subway trains. They started out from the starting point, and had to look for a specified item before going back to the starting point. It really felt like a marathon made much more complicated. What was different was that there was no fixed route, as the competitors had to think of the shortest route. This kind of brain training was very important, and was different from thinking at the table. Running around like that would tire a person physically. Like the wide area of the competitive zone, this competition was famous for the high difficulty in finding something.

(Peh, this is where Kuroko would excel with her teleportation ability! Really, it'd be much easier if they would just gather everyone in Academy City over here!)

Mikoto's ability was powerful, but it was not useful when it had nothing to do with combat. For the sake of ordinary people, the board of directors of Academy City had decreed that any powers that were 'Level 5' were forbidden. With her ability, it'd exceed no matter how she adjusted her power.

Mikoto passed the water stand, and continued to run without noticing the isotonic drinks. In a long distance marathon, too much water content would slow her down.

She again opened the slip of paper.

She reconfirmed the name of the designated item that was required.

(Looks like I have to do something troublesome… Ah!!)

As she ran through the crowd, she spotted the ‘item’ in front of her.

The conditions were,

“When a third-party person has a designated good, you have to get the person’s permission and get that person to follow you back to the starting area.”

(Watch me!!)

Mikoto kicked her shoes, made of highly reactive material, onto the ground, as she dashed into the crowd.

Kamijou placed his hand on Index’s shoulder, who was sighing as she saw the ‘no access’ sign.

“Alright Index, we’ll only smell the food if we continue to stay here. Didn’t the guidebook say that there are other hawker stores? We’ll look for others.”

“Uuuuuuu, it’s just right in front of me; why can’t I get it!?”

Index gave a poetic cry. Although the Anti-Skill member who set up the ‘no access’ sign looked sorry, rules were rules.

“To…Touma, where’s the nearest ‘store’ now?”

“Hm? Let me see……it should be here, right?”

Kamijou flipped through the guidebook.

“Walk west for 3km. Hey, isn’t that the same place as the underground entrance we need to go through to get across?”

“……Uuu……waaahhh!”

“Mm, however, if I go here, I won’t be able to get to my next match in time. The bus route……aiya, doesn’t seem like they’ll reach her during the parade. Can’t be helped, Index. You’ll have to endure till the end of the **Big Ball Rolling** match.”

"……(Angry!)"

"Eh? Wait a minute! Why are you angry at me!? The location of the hawker stores and the bus routes have got nothing to do with me!?"

Index, who didn't hear anything, opened up her cute mouth like a beast, and leapt forward. It was so fast that even the Anti-Skill nee-san was unable to react in time. Am I going to be eaten!? Kamijou covered his head with his hands.

His body started to move fast.

Index's teeth missed their target.

Eh? The girl gave a puzzled look. It was supposed to be a guaranteed 100% strike every time she leapt and bit someone's head.

However, there was a reason why she had missed.

Because Misaka Mikoto, who had ran in from the right, grabbed Kamijou's collar and ran to the left.

"Great! I got my winning condition! WAHAHAHA!!"

"Wai…wait a mi… this is unbearable! At……at least explain why……"

In front of Index, who was stunned, the two vanished into the crowd. Seeing the nun sitting on the floor lifelessly, the Anti-Skill nee-san couldn't help it but give some biscuit-like rations to her.

Part 8

Kamijou, who had been stepped on like a rug, walked into the competition area with Misaka Mikoto, through the white tape of the finishing line.

The competitive area was in a completely different dimension compared to where they had the ‘Wrench Pole Competition’. This place seemed to belong to some sports university, as the orange concrete floor had white lines on it, like it was a standard race track. The spectator stands were ladder-type, like a professional stadium, and there were so many more video cameras used for reporting and security guards.

The high school committee members stationed there covered Mikoto with a large sports towel after she finished running the marathon. The signals they gave to provide drinks and a mini oxygen task were executed beautifully. Not only were they practical, it was like they had also considered that they were on air. After this, there would be a recognition ceremony and a simple interview. Before the next few participants arrived, the first few had to wait at another area.

(So completely different…even the committee members seem like they were trained intensively.)

The female high school committee member who was taking care of Mikoto stared at Kamijou’s face. What now, Kamijou thought as he raised his guard. At that moment, the committee member whispered,

“……(Kamijou Touma, there’s nothing wrong with the ‘specified object’, but aren’t you getting hit on by girls quite often?)”

“……(This voice, wa! Fukiyose-san!?)”

Kamijou looked carefully, the person in front of him was Fukiyose Seiri. She was wearing a short-sleeved T-shirt, shorts and a thin jacket. She stopped whatever she was doing, but because it was work time, she couldn’t just shout at him like usual. They whispered to each other,

“……(I’m really sorry for what happened just now, because of me, Kamijou Touma’s neglect, I accidentally saw you changing clothes…)”

“……(I’m trying really hard to forget about that, so don’t mention it again, Kamijou Touma!)”

“……(Uuu, I’m really sorry. Hm, come to think about it, Fukiyose, is that lamb-shaped infrared device really that good?)”

“……(—You want one?)”

“……(No…it’s not that, I’m just curious. I never said that I wanted it!)”

“……(Keep quiet. Everyone’s really serious! Anyway, don’t interfere with the running of the competition or meddle with the competitors!)”

Fukiyose didn’t listen to Kamijou. She picked up the record board that was placed on the ground together with the carton full of drinks and jotted down the records of the competition with a ball-point pen. On a side note, both of them didn’t notice Mikoto, who was right beside them, giving a sulking expression.

From the atmosphere of the discussion, Kamijou sensed that Fukiyose was unwilling to talk anymore, so he turned to Mikoto, who had forcefully dragged him along.

“Come to think of it, Mikoto. I’m sweating profusely, and my calves are aching. I remember that for this competition, the third-party has to agree; did I see it wrongly?”

“Ah—you saw that wrongly. But the notice never said that you can’t promise afterwards.”

“……”

“Alright, don’t sit down like a useless bum. Really, it’s ugly looking.”

Mikoto covered Kamijou’s head using the towel that was placed on her, and rubbed the sweat off his face forcefully.

Kamijou felt ashamed as it feels like an adult drying a child’s hair. But Mikoto was too forceful, and he couldn’t wave it off. He thought that it’d be a lot more childish if he was swinging his arms about, and so he endured it silently.

After that, Mikoto wanted to get him a drink and a straw, but she stopped after seeing the straw. Mikoto looked at Fukiyose, and shook the isotonic drink in her hand slightly. Fukiyose, who was about to write something on the record board, looked up, and shook her head. Seemed like a participant couldn’t request more than one bottle of drink.

“……”

Mikoto froze for a while, she shyly watched the sand flew into Kamijou’s mouth, who was coughing non-stop, and was a bit fearful. She trembled for several seconds,

“Oi! You’re really useless! I really don’t know how to deal with you! Take it!!”

“Wah!!”

Mikoto pressed the bottom of the drink onto Kamijou’s face, not expecting the drink to burst out of the straw. She was flushed red now as she turned her back to Kamijou and vanished to the stage. Because of the number of people participating, the rules for the class vs class and same year vs same year were rather lax, but the top three individual would be commended. Mikoto, who came in first place, would definitely be commended.

Fukiyose, who was standing aside, suddenly sucked her tongue contemptuously. As the competition was still going on, she was standing by, preparing for the next person.

The one being commended was only Mikoto. Kamijou’s existence was similar to that of a bun being eaten in a bun eating contest; there was no use for it after the competition, so he just walked to the exit.

(Being stepped on and kicked……to think that in this competition, an ordinary civilian gets it much worse than the participant? Isn’t this competition supposed to be about having a participant get involved with the public, and being unable to use their own abilities?)

Kamijou thought about this, but nobody could give him an answer. He sipped the drink that Mikoto had given him, thinking that Index was still at that ‘no access’ place.

Suddenly, a piece of paper was carried to him by the wind.

It seemed to be the instructions of the Borrowing Race. There were no other participants here other than Mikoto, who was so far ahead of the pack, so this sheet of instructions should be hers. Fukiyose had already recorded the results on the record board, so it should be useless. The cleaner will clean it up if I leave it

here, Kamijou thought as he picked up this flammable trash.

(What……)

What's was written on the paper was,

"A high school student who participated in the first competitive event."

(What, that's what it's all about? The 'Wrench Pole Competition' did occur directly after the opening ceremony. But besides me, there are hundreds of thousands of people who fulfill this criteria…so why am I…forced…to run this much?)

Kamijou, whose fatigue was rising rapidly, drooped his shoulders as he limped towards the exit. While walking out of the exit, he thought, eh? Why did Misaka know that I took part in the Wrench Pole Competition? And became puzzled.

Part 9

The competitive arena was rather far with respect to where Index was.

So, Kamijou decided to take the bus back.

Of the current buses that were operative, 70% of them were automatic without anybody manning them. The bus, which was powered by electricity, glided forward without making a single sound.

In the development of unmanned technology, like commercial planes, trains and ships, it was said that the most difficult one to develop was the car. In all forms of transport, in the air, sea and on land, the required manipulation and decision making was most complex. So at this moment, these vehicles were only allowed to be used in Daihaseisai under restricted circumstances.

Kamijou got past the auto-door and into the bus. As ordinary vehicles were banned, the bus was rather packed. Although there was a driver seat, it was surrounded and isolated with strengthened glass, like a telephone booth. Just seeing how the unmanned bus worked, like turning and accelerating, would amaze anybody.

Without using gasoline, the extremely quiet bus stopped a few times, before it reached Kamijou's destination.

There was still quite a distance to where he had separated from Index. Because part of the road could not be accessed due to the ensemble parade, the bus route was somewhat altered.

Kamijou quickly walked on the road, as the related broadcasts could be heard everywhere, even though it was mixed in with the noise of the crowd. Besides using the audio devices to broadcast, they were using the large screens on department stores and airships to air the live telecasts and other feeds through the temporary studios and different media.

"Regarding the results of the Men's obstacle course just now, after some decisions—"

"The matches in one hour's time will be as follows. There's no access to the matches once it starts, everyone please take note--"

"In the Borrowing Race organized by four different schools, Tokiwadai Middle School got an overwhelming victory as expected. The first place has the honor of being 7 minutes faster than the other competitors—"

"General report, we're looking for a missing child. Will Charles Goncourt-sama from St Tropez, France, please head toward a security robot camera nearby upon hearing this message, and show your face and the Daihaseisai access pass issued to you by Academy City. We'll send your child to where you want to pick them up. Veuillez l'entendre. Nous vous annonçons un enfant manquant.—"

Hearing these high decibel broadcasts, Kamijou looked around.

(Anyhow, did Index just move about and get lost?)

It'd be alright if he could contact her through phone — too bad Index's zero yen

phone had run out of power. Although she had a photographic memory, and she could remember any place she went to, Kamijou was still worried. Walking in this hot day, he thought,

(I should have bought a gift for her when I passed the stores just now.)

But it was too late to go back. Kamijou's next match was coming up. Anyway, he had to find Index, and then headed to the arena where his classmates were. Thinking about this, he hastened his steps.

He suddenly stopped.

He saw a familiar face in the crowd.

Hair dyed red, wearing earrings. Rings on each of his 10 fingers, smoking a cigarette, tattoo markings underneath his right eye. It was a priest that didn't look like a priest.

Stiyl Magnus.

A real magician from the Necessarius department of the Anglican Church.

(??? What's with him, is he here to find Index?)

It was really hard to imagine Stiyl of the magical world getting interested with something like Daihaseisai. He should be here to look for his old colleague, Index, that he was normally unable to meet.

To Kamijou, he had no reason to object. It was even much better for someone who knew Index to be around, since that person could help him take care of Index during his matches. Kamijou inadvertently moved closer to him.

He seemed to be talking to someone.

"……So…this is how it is — the probability is rather high, isn't it?"

He could hear voices.

Who was he talking to? Kamijou wanted to find out, and moved forward. Standing there was his classmate, Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He was a double agent for both Academy City and the Anglican Church.

Tsuchimikado looked extremely easy to approach, but he was speaking so softly that nobody around him could hear anything.

“Yeah. That’s … I heard that— That’s right, to these people, there’s no better chance … than now.”

Kamijou had a bad premonition about this.

Although they looked like they were joking about, and at first glance, it was like they were mixed into the crowd attending Daihaseisai…but something was missing. They didn’t look happy at all. This was not a smile that was formed with real positive feelings, but a fake smile formed by negative feelings. This kind of fake smile was unrelated to Daihaseisai.

In order to get away from this thought, Kamijou proceeded forward.

Stiyl Magnus quietly said,

“So, the task is up to us to get rid of the magicians in this city.”

In this world Kamijou Touma lived in, where science formed the world…

Became a world filled with magic all because of this statement.

Between the lines 1

Shirai Kuroko.

A student of the famous power development school, Tokiwadai Middle School, a petite girl with two ponytails tied to the back. She was a Level 4, and had the Teleport ability, so her abilities were considered outstanding in Tokiwadai. But she was unable to take part in this year’s Daihaseisai.

Because of an event that happened several days ago, her injuries weren't healed, and she was still covered in bandages.

Although she was supposed to be resting, she had snuck out of the hospital, and was now on the roads of Academy City. Although she was still wearing the standard Tokiwadai uniform, she was sitting in a wheelchair. The wheelchair operated differently from other wheelchairs, its special feature was that its wheels were slanted like an F1 car.

The one moving the wheelchair wasn't Shirai Kuroko.

It was the person behind her, holding the handles of the wheelchair, Uiharu Kazari. They were both members of Judgment, an organization made up of espers whose job was to maintain law and order in Academy City.

Uiharu was dressed in a short-sleeved T-shirt and black shorts, like a sportsgirl; however, this didn't match the flower ring made of roses and Chinese hibiscus. The artificial flowers that were blooming made her look like she was wearing a huge vase on her head.

Uiharu smiled as she pushed the wheelchair.

"I feel uneasy just thinking about us working so hard in this hot day while Shirai-san is resting alone in an air-con room. I really wanted to call Shirai-san to help, hehehe."

"……I'll really thank you for this perfect friendship. When I'm healed up, how about I teleport your clothes away and make you naked? Please look forward to it."

Shirai weakly replied. During Daihaseisai, she was feeling bored about having to lie down alone in a room, so she was actually grateful for Uiharu forcing her out, but she was not going to let her know that even till death.

Though it was not the first time that she was experiencing Daihaseisai, the atmosphere of these large scale events every year was different. Walking on the streets where she normally walked on, one would feel that the streets had completely changed with all the sports broadcasts and the pyrotechnics sounds.

Although Shirai felt that the surprised expressions of these people—those non-

residents of Academy City—were rather irritating, but to her, who understood her own power, she understood that this couldn't be helped.

Shirai sat on the wheelchair, looking around.

"Is there anything wrong with this year's Daihaseisai?"

"Up till now, there's no real problem. The worst case is about a corporate spy disguising as a fried cuttlefish seller whom tries to extract DNA maps from samples of saliva from the students. This is the first year I'm taking part in Daihaseisai as a member of Judgment, so I don't feel anything serious there. I heard from sempai nee-san that the situation this year is much easier than previous years."

"Hm, compared to the unsolved cases where an AI denies the theory that an unmanned helicopter was shot down, or the unsolved case of the arena where the cultural and spiritual activists exploded, this is a whole lot better."

Hearing Shirai say this so easily, Uiharu's face became stiff. Because these issues hadn't escalated, she had no idea that they had occurred. To Shirai, as a member of Judgment taking part in Daihaseisai, she knew that it was common to get involved in these troubles.

At this moment, Shirai heard a broadcast from an arena.

It came from the big screen on a department store's wall. It didn't seem to be a live telecast, but a highlight reel of what happened just now.

The male reporter explained clearly,

"In the Borrowing Race organized by four different schools, Tokiwadai Middle School got an overwhelming victory as expected. The first place has the honor of being 7 minutes faster than the other competitors—"

The image on the display was a stadium located somewhere.

They had captured the competitors' faces and were announcing the names. Ordinary people would think that the participant's fame would increase the moment they were shown on global television…in fact, this was not the case. There were 1.8 million participants. Even if one got the first place, their names

wouldn’t be engraved into history like the Olympics. It was not like major league scouts appearing in a minor league game. In this situation, it was impossible to remember all the people’s faces and names. Even if there was a commotion, they would be forgotten soon after. This was the rule of the general audience.

Because of this, Shirai Kuroko was uninterested in the image on the large screen.

“—In first place, we have Misaka Mikoto-senshu[5]. She’s still in good condition even after she reached the finishing point, and one gets the feeling that she’s extremely up for this.”

Shirai quickly turned her head over to the large screen.

The shock was so violent that even Uiharu, who was pushing the wheelchair, inadvertently jerked.

“Ah ah Onee-sama

Woo hoo my beloved Onee-sama

Ah ah Onee-sama! (Note that this is how the author originally arranged the words. It was in ‘5-7-5’ Japanese haiku format)

In the end, you got the complete victory, showing the world your body that’s so dynamic! Too bad I can’t attend and record this; please forgive my uselessness!!”

Shirai’s eyes were glowing extremely brightly. But—

“Taking care of the companion who ran with her, this really gives a good impression. Is this a habit that students of the famous Tokiwadai Middle School have?”

What? Shirai was puzzled.

(Wha…!?)

The next moment, she saw it.

Misaka Mikoto pulling a boy to the arena.

Misaka Mikoto using a towel to wipe the boy's body carefully.

Misaka Mikoto giving the drink that she drank from to the boy.

(That mister dares to…!! He dares…dares to allow onee-sama to hold him by the hand, and even allows her to wipe off his sweat, Ah… AHhhhhh, and he even drank from the drink that onee-sama drank from AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
)

Shirai Kuroko was slightly trembling as she looked at the extremely fortunate boy in front of her.

This guy seemed familiar.

He was the guy that she met a few days ago.

Shirai Kuroko used all her strength to force herself to stand up from the wheelchair.

"I…I'M GONNA KILL YOU! DON'T THINK THAT YOU CAN COME BACK ALIVE!! Onee-sama too, to even blush in front of the audience like that! I'M REALLY UNHAPPY!"

"Wait…wait a minute, Shirai-san!! Please calm down!! You're injured badly, how can you stand up!? This isn't the time to be like a shounen manga hero getting pumped up!!!!"

While Shirai Kuroko, who was exceedingly angry, and Uiharu Kazari, who was about to cry out, were creating a ruckus, Daihaseisai was now getting even more exciting.

Chapter 2: A Stadium of Magicians and Espers.
“Stab_Sword.”

Part 1

The next event was ‘Big Ball Rolling’.

Kamijou and his peers of the same age had already entered the arena. In this not so spacious compound, where the ground was covered with asphalt, both sides were lined up like they were in a cavalry war.

The rules were somewhat different from standard rules. When the gunshot to indicate the start of the match was fired, competitors would have to push 50 large balls—25 on the left side, and 25 on the right side—to the enemy’s line. The winner would be the year group who pushed more than 25 balls past the opponent’s line.

What was different from normal Big Ball Rolling was that participants from both sides would have to touch all the balls at least once. In other words, during this event, participants could use their powers to obstruct the opponent.

Like the other students, Kamijou placed his hand on a white team’s ball that was 2 meters in diameter, as he smelled sweat and dust. Before the shot was fired, the atmosphere was tense. Although the nature of this match was similar to a game, the surrounding atmosphere made anyone feel serious.

But in this situation, Kamijou was worried about another thing.

He was thinking about the conversation he had with Stiyl and Tsuchimikado 20 minutes ago.

“Academy City is busy hosting ordinary tourists, so they had to neglect security?”

“Then a magician saw a loophole and decided to exploit it.”

Kamijou’s class was responsible for 3 large balls, and there were three groups: one for boys, one for girls, and one for both boys and girls. Kamijou was in the boys only group. From nearby, Himegami Aisa gave him a wordless stare, like she was trying to say something. But Kamijou, who was too busy thinking about the conversation, didn’t notice her staring at him.

“But, what’s the reason? Are these people here to kidnap Index? I won’t sit back and watch if it really involves her!”

“Don’t panic, Kamijou Touma. The enemy’s target this time isn’t her. To the enemy, if she gets involved, it’ll only make things more difficult for them.”

“Ah? What does that mean?”

“I’ll explain this to you later, Kami-yan. Let’s talk about the main issue, which is the main reason why the magicians snuck into Academy City.”

“Everyone, get set,” the loudspeakers in the campus blared.

Everyone was holding their breath, bending their bodies slightly over. Kamijou took a glimpse around. Tsuchimikado, who was wearing sunglasses, placed his hands on the ball like everyone else.

“Those magicians……? There’s not just one?”

“Right now, we can confirm that there are at least two of them. Lidvia Lorenzetti of the Roman Catholic Church and the courier that she hired, Oriana Thomson from England. Both of them are women. There should be at least one person they’re dealing with, but right now, it isn’t clear. Rumors have it that the biggest suspect is Bishop Nikolai Tolstoy of the Russian Church, but we can’t confirm it as of now.”

“Courier? This deal, what’s it all about?”

“Exactly what it says on the tin, Kami-yan. Those guys intend to trade some

spiritual stuff that the Church passed down."

BAM!! The gunshot signaling the start of the match was fired.

Kamijou Touma, who was thinking about these things, was late by a second.

"Why here……isn't Academy City the least associated place with magic?"

"That's right nya. But that is the reason. Neither Anti-Skill or Judgment of Academy City can catch magicians from the magical world anyhow. Also, the Cross Army and Necessarius of the magical world cannot step into Academy City, which belongs to the science world. So now, this has become a situation where both sides are unable to take action."

"If it wasn't for Daihaseisai, the actions of Lidvia and everyone else would be limited due to the tight security. Only in this extremely busy period will Academy City loosen its guard. That's why they're able to act."

In order to keep chase with the large ball, Kamijou frantically ran forward.

The sound of footsteps and balls rolling continued to rumble the earth. Because the inside of the ball was just air, one wouldn't feel that it was too heavy, but rather the ball was so light like a balloon that it'd be affected by the wind, and would roll sideways if one didn't pay attention.

"Then can't you guys send in many Necessarius members like Stiyl to arrest them?"

"The reason why I can be here is because of the proper reason that 'I'm your friend, and I'm here personally to sightsee.' If the situation changes such that 'a group of Anglicans' is here, other magical organisations will use this opportunity to request that 'we want to come in.' Do you think that all these people are friendly to Academy City? There would definitely be people who would do some sabotaging. Do you think that these people will protect this place that's completely different from the magic world?"

"As the leader of the scientific world, Academy City's voice is a lot louder than any small and nameless magical group, nya. But at this moment, if they reject the proposal, larger groups will then request to go in. Thus, this situation with Lidvia and Oriana is rather sensitive, Kami-yan. In this troublesome situation, if

we call in other comrades, Academy City will be swallowed in chaos. In order to limit the number of people who know of this issue, the only people allowed to get involved are ‘magicians who are familiar with the people of Academy City.’ There are few magicians with links to Academy City. So this time, we can only use a few elite troops to get in.”

The large balls were moving even faster now. The one that Kamijou’s group was pushing was the furthest in front. In other words, it had the highest likelihood of touching the enemy’s ball first.

“??? Isn’t Kanzaki Kaori another person who’s familiar with us? Isn’t she supposed to be some superhuman called a Saint? Isn’t it better to have more people?”

“Kanzaki cannot be here, especially in this situation, because this spiritual item is rather special.”

“Ah? What does that mean?”

“Kami-yan. Speaking about this spiritual weapon called the ‘Stab Sword’, its effects are—”

Because the ball was too big, Kamijou was unable to see ahead from his position. Hearing Aogami Pierce shout ‘Incoming!’ Kamijou gathered his consciousness.

“It’s said that the sword can kill a Saint with one blow.”

WATCH OUT! A shout came from behind.

Every student other than Kamijou ran away from the ball.

(Eh? Isn't there some more time before we touch the enemy's ball?)

Just when Kamijou was puzzled…

An impact came from behind.

“Ugh……WA!!”

From behind, the ball that belongs to the girls' group was rolling extremely fast, catching up with them and swallowing Kamijou. When the ball that belongs to the mixed group passed by, Fukiyose Seiri coldly said, "What on earth are you doing? Kamijou Touma?" while Himegami Aisa glanced at him, her expression seeming to say, "I was right, you were looking troubled."

Part 2

Saint.

"That's the one, the humans who are similar to the Son of God in Christian teachings. In the Idol Theory of Christianity, when duplicating the Cross that the Son of God was executed on, the duplicate will have some power as well. By using this theory on the relationship between the Son of God and humans, any human similar to the Son of God will have power equivalent to him. These people chosen by the heavens are known as 'Saints'. These people have an inexplicable amount of power. However……"

The Big Ball Rolling Match was over now (Luckily, Kamijou's school won). As they were leaving the arena, both Kamijou and Tsuchimikado were continuing their conversation and drinking sports drinks given by Fukiyose Seiri, who had said "You need to replenish your amino acids. This drink includes black vinegar and soy isoflavone."

"The Saints have a weaknesses."

"Really? But isn't Kanzaki strong enough to take on a real angel on her own?"

Angel. This word didn't sound very real, but because Kamijou had seen it for himself, he had to believe it. That angel who called herself Misha Kreutzev had enough power to destroy the entire world with a single finger, and yet Kanzaki had been able to fight the angel till the end. No matter what Kamijou or anyone else did, they couldn't match up to her.

Tsuchimikado was gulping down the drink, saying,

“But her powers do have a weakness. Listen closely, a Saint is a human who has the same type and nature of body as the Son of God, so not only do they have the same amount of power, they have the similar types, characteristics and features.”

Tsuchimikado took a deep breath,

“—Basically, they have inherited the weaknesses of the Son of God.”

Ah! Kamijou inadvertently cried out.

“The Son of God died once. It doesn’t matter that he resurrected and rose to Heaven; the fact that he died cannot be denied. Kami-yan, do you know how the Son of God, who was hung on the Cross, was killed?”

Tsuchimikado grinned at Kamijou, and continued,

“He was stabbed. After his arms and legs were nailed onto the Cross, he was stabbed through by a spear. Whether the spear gave the critical blow, or whether it was used to confirm that he was dead, is still being hotly debated by Bible scholars. But the fact that he got ‘stabbed’ wasn’t changed, nya.”

Tsuchimikado took another gulp of drink, and continued,

“The ‘Stab Sword’ has the religious meaning of execution and assassination, a spiritual weapon that can expand and contract at will, to any length. It’s said that it can ‘Stab through a dragon and pin it onto the ground.’ It’s useless against humans, but it’s a sure kill against Saints. No matter how far, just pointing the sword at something is enough to kill it.”

Hearing this, Kamijou broke out in cold sweat.

Seemed like Tsuchimikado wanted to add on to Kamijou’s imagination, as he proceeded on,

“Sounds scary? When the ‘Stab Sword’ is activated, whether one’s in a nuclear shelter, or in the core of the Earth, or even if the person hides in the netherworld, just pointing the sword at a Saint is enough to kill him or her. It’s much more convenient and ruthless than a nuclear weapon. Because this sword was created

to destroy any selfish and greedy Saints, nya!”

“What are these magicians thinking, dealing for this kind of thing……”

“It’s for war, Kami-yan. A Saint is the magical equivalent to a nuclear bomb. After killing the enemy’s Saints and protecting all your comrades in the first place will result in a drastic change of tide in battle.”

War.

To ordinary high school students living in modern Japan, this didn’t sound sensible. But Kamijou had come close to it once. Once, because of the magical Book of the Law and the nun who claimed to have cracked the code, Orsola Aquinas, the Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Amakusas had a three-way battle. If there was a real war, the scale would definitely be much larger. A war that would affect the entire world, a war that would involve ordinary and innocent people, a war that would change the landscape.

“However, there are a lot more magicians who aren’t Saints, right? Like the Anglicans, they can battle on even if they don’t have Kanzaki, right?”

“Kami-yan, the problem isn’t there. It’s not whether we can win. Once we get the wrong feeling that we can win, we’ll provoke a war. Once a Saint, who signifies power, is dead, it’ll likely destroy the balance of the Magical society. It’s like how an entire country grieves when a member of Royalty is killed, nya. People who feel that this is a great chance to succeed will jump into battle without hesitation — these people never notice, however, that what awaits them is a tragic failure.”

Tsuchimikado’s words had a cold and oppressive feeling in them.

It was probably because of his status as an agent, working in different places, that he knew the weaknesses of this world.

“A Saint being killed wantonly will destabilize a country and its organizations religiously. If they are attacked from within or from outside by magical organizations, they’ll get destroyed. These situations won’t appear on stage, but they’re enough to cause the countries and the world to collapse. Once the balance of an area is unstable, many different groups will plan and set up a new order, and end up causing war as a result. As an international security

maintenance organization created to counter magicians, the 0th Parish of the Anglican Church, Necessarius, won't let this off easily, nya."

This really sounded like a resolve, but Tsuchimikado's tone at the end was really frivolous.

(Is this tone of his really a relaxed one from the view of a spy, or is he trying to suppress his feelings as a professional?)

The amateur Kamijou was unable to judge this.

Kamijou drunk the drink that was not so cold now, and said,

"However, in this serious situation, isn't it better to ask Index for help?"

That was right, Index was still not around.

After hearing Tsuchimikado and Stiyl's explanation, he had run immediately to the arena without meeting Index.

If it was related to magic, she was a very reliable helper. To Kamijou, nobody knew magic better than her.

However, Tsuchimikado rejected this proposal with just a sentence,

"No way, we can't use Index. Not only must we not allow her to be near the scene, we can't let her know anything about this."

"……Why?"

"Hm. Because there are a lot of complicated reasons. Alright, I'll explain everything from the beginning."

Tsuchimikado seemed to find it bothersome as he scratched his head.

"Like what I just said, the science side cannot cross over to the magic side. Right now, there are many problems inside and outside Academy City…do you understand if I say it like this, nya?"

"Ah? I do know that Anti-Skill and Judgment cannot face off against magicians directly."

He seemed to have heard of this before when he had snuck into ‘Misawa Cram School’ with Stiyl to find the alchemist hiding himself inside.

The science and magical worlds were two different worlds on their own, two completely different sides. In this situation, if any policing agency of Academy City was to catch a magician, it would cause the risk of information regarding the magical world being leaked to the science world.

“For example, it’s like our newest and most advanced fighter jet fell into the hands of the enemy?”

“That’s right. And if there are a lot of magicians who stepped into Academy City as a group, the situation will be much worse. Because in this case, the magicians who intend to do the trade in Academy City can do whatever they want. How can anyone leave them alone?”

Kamijou felt that this was a rather stupid structure. Everyone had the same intentions, but were unable to move because of this kind of reason.

“So this time, we have an exception. We’ll have me, Kami-yan and Stiyl, the three of us working together.”

Tsuchimikado grinned.

“Of course, some organisations will be unhappy about this. These people are observing, but are unable to get into Academy City. Some of them want to solve this case, but for the wrong intentions. These people are using spells that act like radar, sensing any magical flow. Once there’s movement, they’ll rush in.”

“Hmm……so that’s what it’s all about?”

Kamijou could only say this, since to be honest, he was unable to imagine what a magic flow was like.

“But, what has this magic detection got to do with Index? She can’t use magic! Even if those guys can use radar-like spells, there’s no need to hide Index.”

Although Kamijou Touma had lost his memories, he still had this knowledge. Although Index was the keeper of 103,000 grimoires, she couldn’t use it. This was to prevent her from getting into trouble by using them.

Facing Kamijou's doubts, Tsuchimikado bitterly laughed,

"This is the difference in values. Hear this, Kami-yan. For the past few months, there had been quite a few magical occurrences—and you were able to settle them perfectly—but in the magical world, nobody knows that you were involved."

"It doesn't matter. I'll have a larger headache if too many people know. But why?"

"What I'm trying to say is that in comparison, Index's name is a lot more noticeable. The people in the magical world won't feel that this is 'Something that happened around Kamijou Touma,' but rather 'Something that happens around Index, the keeper of the 103,000 grimoires.'"

Kamijou thought — So that was it.

Tsuchimikado seemed to be able to sense something from his face. He happily said,

"So these people will think that 'everything happens around Index.' So, using common knowledge, they'll focus their search on Index, right? But in reality, a sensing spell that can cover Academy City entirely doesn't exist. Even if an organization like the 'Gregorian Chant' uses this spell, the maximum range for them is around 500 meters. So by putting Index away from this case, those guys outside will focus on her. This way, if there's a magical war somewhere, it's likely that it won't be found out, nya. On the other hand, if we get her involved in this, we'll be in for a lot of trouble."

"In other words, we cannot allow Index to sense any magical presence, or anything related to it?"

Kamijou thought, this sounded easy, but was actually difficult. Index had memorized the 103,000 grimoires in order to counter all magicians. She wouldn't let go of any tiny clue easily. Once she found one, she would spring into action.

That said, even if he explained it to Index first and told her 'not to move,' she'd likely not agree to it easily. Normally, she hated getting others involved in any magical related cases, so she would definitely not agree to having others take

care of this for her.

As Kamijou was thinking about this, Tsuchimikado gently shook the empty bottle.

“However, Kami-yan, this is another ‘misfortune’. I guess you won’t be happy since Index’s been getting all the credit?”

“Idiot. I’m worried for her. Really, that Index is too much. My troubles are already so much!”

Kamijou sucked his tongue as he continued his thoughts. Seeing his face from the side, Tsuchimikado laughed. That laugh had no sense of irony or mockery.

“Anyway, this is how it goes, nya. Kami-yan will take care of Index, and try to hide any hint of what’s happening in Academy City. Oh yeah, you can go shopping with her; try and get her away from any place where there might be a magical battle.”

“Ah, what are you saying! You’re making it sound so easy…!”

“There’s no problem! To this unfortunate Kamijou Touma, this is but a trivial matter!”

“Where is this confidence coming from!? What’ll happen for our next match? Fukiyose will go berserk if we play hooky! Isn’t this much scarier?”

“I’ll leave that to you! Right now, the most important thing is Index. However, that Index, she can be easily controlled with food, nya. If anything happens, throw the food in the opposite direction, nya!”

“……You rascal, if Index heard this, she’d bite till your skull breaks. Wait, that’s not right, I never saw her bite a human other than me……”

Tsuchimikado patted Kamijou’s shoulder hard as Kamijou said this listlessly.

Part 3

The asphalt road under the hot sun was really hot.

This was what Index, who was hungry and lying on the road, thought.

After the tour was over, the female Anti-Skill member, Yomikawa Aiho, who was removing the ‘no access’ sign, couldn’t take it anymore. She stopped what she was doing and picked Index up. Although it was not going to cool Index down, Yomikawa placed Index on the long bench under the tree. The calico cat followed behind Yomikawa before jumping onto the bench.

Komoe-sensei, whom she had just contacted, finally arrived. This teacher, who was older than Yomikawa-sensei, was wearing a light green sleeveless vest and a short white dress. This get-up probably meant that she wanted to cheer for her students, and it was really scary that this attire was suitable for her even at her age. Deep inside, Yomikawa sighed.

“Hi! Yomikawa-sensei! I got a call saying that someone I know is with you now. WAH!”

Seeing Index like this, Komoe-sensei cried out.

“Sister……Sister-chan!? Why are you as listless as a shrunken vegetable? Don’t tell me that you got heatstroke because this Komoe-sensei came late!!”

Hearing her high decibel scream, the calico cat gave a disgusted cry as its fur stood up.

Er……Yomikawa looked at Index, who was lying on the long bench, and thought. It looked like she got heatstroke, and no matter what anyone said, fainting when she was wearing such a thick nun's habit in such hot weather, it was not weird for anyone to think that she got heatstroke.

“Komoe-sensei. SENSEI!! Okay okay, calm down, will ya?”

“How……can I calm down! Although Sister-chan isn’t from my class, a teacher should act as the guardian of the children.”

“Okay okay, you can talk about what you think an ideal teacher is later! That’s the child, she doesn’t have heatstroke, she’s just hungry.”

What? Komoe-sensei tilted her head, puzzled.

She then continued,

“That’s……that’s why I can’t calm down! Malnutrition can be dangerous, you know!!”

“What? Being unflappable in such a situation, Komoe-sensei is really a sempai I respect. However, this child has eaten three packets of rations already.”

Hearing Yomikawa’s irritated tone, the calico cat seemed to say, “Ya ya. I got some biscuits too,” as it gave a comfy cry. There were still some crumbs around its mouth.

“……Then it isn’t that she’s hungry, but she ate too much! I say, as a teacher, you should manage a person’s diet and nutrition……!”

“Then shouldn’t you ask this child directly?”

Seeing Yomikawa point with her finger, Komoe-sensei said “Don’t point at others like that” as she grabbed Yomikawa’s finger and pointed it down. She then inspected Index’s face.

The white nun, now all weak and wobbly, spoke in a soft voice,

“I……I’m hungry……is……is Touma not here yet?”

“You’re really hungry?”

“Didn’t I tell you? Ah, can I hand her over to you?”

Okay, it must be hard on you. Komoe-sensei gave a polite greeting, as Yomikawa walked away, waving her hand behind her. Although this was a bit too sloppy, Yomikawa felt that Komoe-sensei didn’t really need to care so much for the girl.

Komoe-sensei re-inspected Index.

Index was lying lifelessly on the bench, trembling as she said,

“The……the smell of sauce……I’ll reach my limit if I continue to smell

this……”

Komoe-sensei finally let down the burden on her shoulders (Not because she felt helpless, but because she was relieved). Hearing Index mention ‘sauce’, she started to sniff around.

“Hm? Is it that store?”

She looked around. Opposite the road where Yomikawa Aiho had removed the ‘no access’ billboard, one could see an entire row of stores set up and manned by students like a carnival.

“Sister-chan, I bought something back.”

Seeing Komoe-sensei chose a few types of food at the hawker stores, Index suddenly jumped up from the bed.

“Ooo……Oooo……OOOooooooooooooo……”

She let out a cry that was like an archaeologist discovering something that wasn’t excavated yet. The calico cat in her arms let out a similar cry.

“I bought fried noodles, okonomiyaki, smoked sausages, takoyaki……ah, can Miss foreign nun eat octopus?”

“I’ll eat! I’ll eat! Even if it’s natto or dried salted fish, I’ll eat them!”

Seeing the food that the students had cooked packed into transparent plastic containers, although they didn’t look very tasty, Index’s eyes were glowing brightly as she eyed them greedily. The calico cat in her hands slightly trembled. Maybe its animal instincts could sense that Index had a strong attachment to eating.

Komoe-sensei bitterly smiled,

“Ah……ah ha haha. Then let’s use this opportunity to learn how to use chopsticks. One shouldn’t use a fist to hold chopsticks……ahhh!!”

Before Komoe-sensei could even explain, Index had already bit into her target,

gobbling down the food in large mouthfuls. The food that was as tall as a mountain vanished in an instant. The calico cat followed suit, but its critical weakness was that its tongue couldn't take scalding stuff.

Komoe-sensei dropped her shoulders dejectedly.

"Uu……uuuuu. I wanted to……use this opportunity, to let Sister-chan experience a bit of the Japanese culture."

"(Chewing) Eh? Komoe, what did you say?"

After stuffing the last piece of okonomiyaki into her mouth, Index blinked her eyes. The pile of food was now reduced to nothing.

Komoe-sensei, who was passionate about teaching, had a weakness. It was that she'd feel extremely dejected once she lost the opportunity to teach others. But Index, who was too full and satisfied, didn't know this.

Komoe-sensei's shoulders trembled as she said,

"Nothing! Sensei does not regret it! I won't cry because of something like this."

"??? Ah, I haven't thanked you yet. I'm full now; thanks for your hospitality. Eh, weird? Why do you look like you're about to cry?"

Index tilted her head slightly.

"……Come to think of it, where did Touma go? It's almost lunch."

"……About that, speaking of lunch, you just……?"

But Index did not hear Komoe-sensei's words at all.

"Where did Touma go……? I've been feeling that Touma's been separated from me quite often today……"

VRROOM!! Komoe-sensei's passion for teaching was reignited again.

The nun in front of Komoe-sensei didn't seem to belong to any school (That should be the case). In other words, it was hard to go out with Kamijou during Daihaseisai. Although the visitors could take part in competitions, they were

‘only for visitors’, and thus not allowed to compete with the ‘students’. The girl in front of Komoe-sensei was unable to attain her dream of taking part in the competition together with Kamijou.

Komoe-sensei felt that she could understand what Index was thinking.

Being abandoned alone in such a large-scale activity, although one couldn’t see it, the emotional damage done to her should be rather big. On the other hand, if there was some way for her to take part in some event, she should be able to feel a sense of satisfaction. Why couldn’t Kamijou understand this? To abandon this child like this? Komoe-sensei was disappointed in her useless student, and wondered whether there was a solution.

Not a compromise, but a solution.

“No problem, there’s an event which Sister-chan is able to take part in as well.”

The answer emerged. If she was unable to help this child who looked so helpless, then she had no right to be a teacher, yes? Thinking about this, Komoe-sensei giggled before letting out fits of laughter.

“Eh? What did you say?”

“I’m saying, that there’s a way for you to enjoy Daihaseisai with Kamijou! Sister-chan won’t be abandoned and be all alone now!”

Hearing this cheerful voice, Index was initially stunned, before calming down, even forgetting her hunger. The calico cat did not care as it gave a yawn.

“Wha……what? What must I do?”

“It’s this, this!”

Komoe-sensei smiled as she gently pulled her sleeveless vest.

She was wearing a cheerleader uniform.

“He……hehe. Although you can’t take part in the competition, there’s no problem if you’re a cheerleader. Of course, we still have this option. I feel that you’re suited for this! You may find this embarrassing if you do this alone. Don’t

worry, Komoe-sensei will accompany you!”

Komoe-sensei continued to smile. Her capability as an educator was radiating outwards, her face shining brightly like never before.

Seeing Komoe-sensei like this, Index was naturally wary of what was to come.

“Wh……why is Komoe-san so happy?”

“Don’t ask that kind of trivial question. Although it’s an unexpected find, this sensei will still be very satisfied at being able to teach Sister-chan. Hehe, I’m not thinking about repaying that debt from being unable to teach how to use chopsticks!”

Komoe-sensei disregarded the fact that Index was an acquaintance, and pulled Index, who was all stiff now, to some place.

Part 4

Kamijou Touma finally got back to where he had been denied access. There was no sign of Index, the ‘no access’ sign had been removed, and the Anti-Skill nee-san wasn’t around.

Though Tsuchimikado had said,

“Although finding Lidvia and Oriana is important, it’s also important that Index doesn’t find out about what’s happening in Academy City, Kami-yan. We’ll take care of the safety of Academy City and see whether there’s any trace of magic, while you’ll meet Index regularly to keep her busy. Otherwise, if she finds something fishy with our actions, she’ll rush to the center of this incident.”

According to how things were going now, he couldn’t do a thing.

(There’s no one I can ask regarding Index’s whereabouts, and there aren’t any clues either. Her zero-yen phone has no power, so it’s impossible to contact her……no way, don’t tell me she got lost?)

To Kamijou, who was used to life in Academy City, this didn’t seem like anything. But if Stiyl were to know that Index was missing, he’d probably say, “I understand; go die now,” and attack him indiscriminately.

(Hm. Of all these places, where would Index go……)

Kamijou looked around, suddenly fixating his eyes in front. Opposite the road was a group of students manning many food stores.

“No……no way? Don’t tell me she can’t handle her empty stomach and decided to rush all the way over without having any money? If that's the case, a corner may be blown off by the ‘rampage of a hungry girl’……!!”

Kamijou’s expression was greenish now. His right hand had the ‘Imagine Breaker’ ability’. No matter whether it was esper powers, magic or even miracles, he just needed to touch these with his right hand in order to negate them. But facing that girl who bites onto others, he was just a powerless Level 0.

Even so, he had to stop her with this hand of his.

Kamijou decided to walk towards the stalls.

Suddenly, somebody tapped him on the shoulder.

Turning around, Himegami Aisa, who was wearing a short-sleeved shirt and shorts, and Tsuchimikado Maika, who was sitting on a cleaning robot and selling bentos, were staring at him. Himegami was having a conversation with Maika.

“Up till now, you looked like you’re about to face a demon king. Why put on a brave warrior look?”

“Why do you look so dead? Are you hungry? Do you need a bento?”

Kamijou, who was intending to head out to battle, was shaken by the duo’s smooth voices.

“I say. That’s because I left Index, who was hungry, behind, and couldn’t find her when I got back. The nearest source of food is at those stalls. I’m thinking whether that girl is creating a riot down there……!!”

Hearing his tearful complaints, both of them were stunned.

“That nun, I just saw her down there.”

Himegami pointed in a direction completely different from where the stalls were.

“Seems like she was pulled aside by that famous miniature-sized teacher in Kamijou Touma’s school.”

Maika was still sitting on the robot as she tilted her head up, recalling as she said,

“??? She was dragged forcefully……that’s impossible. Komoe-sensei knows Index. What’s the deal? Is she going to introduce Academy City to her? Never mind about that. Anyway, thanks girls; I’ll find them on my own.”

After Kamijou finished speaking and headed towards where Himegami pointed, Tsuchimikado Maika gave a long ‘Do your best!!’, while Himegami remained silent.

(Hm……since when did Himegami and Maika became such good friends? Ah, did she get to know Maika when Maika came over during the summer holidays?)

He thought as he walked along the road. The pedestrians on the streets were admiring the wind turbine rotor blades that generated electricity. The scene did give a fresh feeling.

Suddenly, a cat’s ‘meow’ mewing could be heard.

One would know just by hearing the sound—it was the cry of a calico cat.

“Index?”

Kamijou stopped and turned around to the direction where the cry had come from. It was a little park that was surrounded by buildings. The wired fence was a lot taller than usual, and it looked like it was rejecting and oppressing anything

within a large radius. It was hard to see anything if one looked in from outside the entrance because the lush foliage of trees blocked the line of sight.

Kamijou thought, it couldn’t be helped.

Strictly speaking, it wasn’t a park. There was a sign hung on the wired fence, saying ‘Property of Tadayama University Botanical Department.’ It was a place where they collected data on plant growth. Even during Daihaseisai, where the security was much tighter, nobody was patrolling around here. Though the place was open to the public, it didn’t mean that anyone should go in.

The familiar calico cat stuck its head out. After seeing Kamijou’s face, it hid back into the bushes.

(Only the calico cat……? No, Index won’t let go of that cat so easily. In other words, she’s inside? Hm, if they’re growing apples inside, maybe Index just went in unknowingly.)

Thinking like this made Kamijou go berserk, and he thought that he should check it out. He carefully avoided the branches blocking his way as he entered.

“Index? Are you there? Shout out if you hear me—”

He continued forward, widening his eyes when he saw what was in front of him.

Index was right in front of him.

But why was she changing?

“……”

Kamijou and Index stopped what they were doing.

Komoe-sensei, who was wearing the cheerleader uniform, was facing Index, and her back was facing Kamijou, so she had no idea that he was there.

Kamijou thought — strange.

In his memory, the last time he had seen Index, she was wearing a white nun's habit with gold embroidery that was like a teacup. For some reason however, her

robes were folded neatly on the floor. Also, why were there similar colored undergarments stacked on her robes?

And why was she wearing a cheerleader uniform, a white sleeveless vest and a light green short skirt that was similar to what Komoe-sensei was wearing?

However, Index had only gotten an arm halfway in, as the slanted tail of the vest was covering Index's small breasts. The most surprising thing was that Komoe-sensei was at Index's feet, helping her put on a pair of underwear that was used for cheerleading (it should be the same type as those worn with tennis skirts), and Kamijou just so happened to witness all of this.

Index had already pulled her underwear through one leg, and was about to let it through her other leg, as she maintained this posture, not moving at all.

Of course, in this situation, a skirt wouldn't be able to fulfill its usual purpose. Furthermore, the attire of a cheerleader didn't have a 'cover' function.

Let me repeat again, Index's nun's habit were folded and stacked neatly on the floor.

There was similar colored underwear placed on top of it.

Komoe-sensei was helping Index put on some underwear. If her head hadn't been blocking Kamijou's field of vision, he would have seen something that he wouldn't forget easily.

"……ah……ah……"

Her facial expression went from shock to 'I'm going to kill that guy.' Kamijou was absolutely terrified, breaking out in a cold sweat, and was unable to move. Komoe-sensei, who was wearing the cheerleader's uniform, was talking to Index casually, not knowing what was going on.

"I'm so sorry. Only students are allowed in the schools' proper changing rooms. I'm sorry to ask you to change here……eh, ya!?"

Index wasn't listening at all. The underwear still hanging on her thigh, Index rushed madly onto Kamijou.

“TOUMA!? HOW MANY TIMES HAS IT BEEN!?”

“WAHHH! I’M REALLY SORRY! PLEASE DON’T BITE ME AGAIN!!”

Kamijou twisted his body, wanting to dodge Index’s ‘bite the head’ attack. Index, who had leaped over, pounced onto Kamijou with two hands and stuck tightly onto his body. She was unable to aim at his head however, as her target started to move suddenly.

Chomp! Index’s small mouth bit onto Kamijou’s face.

“WAA……!!”

Kamijou could feel the soft texture of her lips, as well as her hard jagged teeth. That warm thing between the two rows of teeth should be her tongue. The breath warmer than Kamijou’s body temperature blew onto his face. Feeling Index’s saliva, Kamijou couldn’t help but tremble.

“……WA, Index!!”

“……”

Kamijou, whose face was all red now, shouted out, but was unable to hear Index’s reply.

Shua!! Index got away from Kamijou in a fast yet silent manner. Normally, Index would be shouting, but this time, she silently kept her head down, her facial expression could not be seen as even her ears were red. He wondered if she was having any special thoughts about biting others subconsciously? She seemed to have taken a huge blow, not even noticing that her attire was untidy.

Kamijou looked at Komoe-sensei. She just placed her two hands on her face, giving a vague “Wa……aaaaa……” sound, which didn’t sound reliable at all.

“It’s……it’s not, that, Index-hime? It’s alright, this is an accident! An accident! This is unexpected! Please don’t be so serious……eh, WA! Wait a minute, Index, why are you flushed red with anger now? You were shy all over just now! Don’t tell me I said something inappropriate!?”

Seeing the cheerleader girl trembling silently, Kamijou took one step back, two steps. Just when he was about to take a third step.

“—Kamijou.”

A woman’s cold tone pierced through his back.

Kamijou paid attention to Index carefully as he nervously turned around.

Fukiyose Seiri.

Wearing a thin committee jacket over her sports attire, she said,

“I’m here to look for Tsukuyomi-sensei for some administrative work, and came over to check it out because I heard voices……you’re here again?”

She looked at Kamijou together with Index, who was half naked and was trembling slightly, and then at Komoe-sensei, who was flushed red now, then the neatly stacked clothes and underwear, and finally at Index—or more accurately, the underwear hanging on her thigh.

“WHY ARE YOU STANDING AROUND HERE!? YOU SCHOOL REBEL!? GO CHEER FOR EVERYONE!!”

Taking a hard punch that didn’t have any powers in it, Kamijou Touma flew out, rolling on the ground.

Part 5

Kamijou Touma, who was covered in bruises and injuries, finally walked out from the park (more accurately, the botany test site). More accurately, he was being dragged out by an angry Fukiyose Seiri, not by his hand, but by his collar. Inside, Index had probably allowed Komoe-sensei to help her change clothes.

“Really. Do you have any intention to make this event a success? I know that as a committee member, I should be the one putting in the most effort, but I’m angry upon seeing people like you act like it has nothing to do with you!”

Fukiyose said this as she pulled out a packet of milk from her jacket pocket. Maybe her anger led to lack of calcium.

From the atmosphere, one could tell that she was not hiding anything when she was saying “I hate Kamijou Touma,” but rather, they were words from the bottom of her heart.

As Kamijou was being grabbed by the collar and dragged around by her, he said,

“Fu……Fukiyose-san. Wha……what event is our school participating now……?”

“You can’t even remember that? It’s because your brain lacks nutrition. Oh yeah, right now, the highest priority should be in getting enough sugar intake!”

After saying this, she tossed the empty milk packet into the rubbish bin, and dug through her pockets before finding a bar of sugar that was used for coffee.

“Ugh! To think that it would be ordinary, unprocessed sugar!”

Just when Kamijou was about to sneak away, trembling, Fukiyose locked his head under her left arm, and tucked it under her armpit.

“Your sleepy head better wake up now. Otherwise, do you want some soy isoflavone? Maybe some soy bean pudding?”

“Uuuu! If you offered soy pudding from the beginning, this Kamijou Touma would be especially grateful! There should be some sugar content in it, right?”

Facing Fukiyose, who was about to stuff sugar into Kamijou’s mouth, Kamijou’s arms and legs started to move about wildly, but was unable to move away due to his head being stuck under her armpit. He continued to resist until he felt something soft touching his right cheek.

It was Fukiyose Seiri’s ample breasts.

(WAAAHHHH……!?)

Kamijou's resistance multiplied by three. Fukiyose didn't seem to realize this, frowning slightly as she held the sugar bar with one hand.

"Wait a sec! Wait a sec! Even if I eat that, my goofiness can't be cured!!"

"……Don't you feel sad just saying that?"

I'm not sad at all! Kamijou quickly tilted his head sideways, only to feel the elastically of Fukiyose's breasts. His body went stiff immediately.

Fukiyose gave a surprised look, and finally let Kamijou out of the lock.

I'm saved, Kamijou thought as he gasped for air.

Fukiyose then grabbed him by the collar again.

"Right now, our school is participating in the second-year girls tug-of war, and three events on the guys side. Which side do you want to cheer for? I guess you want to go to the girls side, because you're that kind of person!"

"Why are you saying something so vicious? Why are you so cold to me, Fukiyose? Are you promoting internal CoolBiz sports?"

(Note: CoolBiz is a campaign originally launched by the Japanese. It's made up of two parts, 'Cool' means 'cooling' and 'Biz' means 'business'. Workers are encouraged to wear short-sleeved shirts without jackets or ties, and air conditioner temperatures are to be set at 28°C. Right now, Kamijou is mocking Fukiyose for purposely showing such a cold front.)

"Sorry, my defense isn't that thin."

This was exactly like a WarmBiz that was as thick as an iron wall! Kamijou thought. He felt that she wouldn't find it funny anyway, and did not say anything.

(Note: WarmBiz is the opposite of CoolBiz, and that it's done during the winter instead. Air conditioner temperatures are to be set at 20°C, and people are to wear more clothes. Kamijou is mocking Fukiyose's defense for being as thick as

those clothes worn during WarmBiz.)

“However, Fukiyose, is there any problems with your committee work?”

“……Why do you have to worry about this for me?”

“This so-called feeling of helplessness should be like this, I guess……isn’t organizing this event very difficult and tiring? Although I’m not sure regarding the details, is it right for me to only bother about my own things?”

A committee member had to do all sorts of various things in Daihaseisai, like preparing a match, refereeing, carry out broadcasts before, during and after the events, taking care of lost children and giving basic road directions. Not only that, they had to take part in the competition as participants. Compared to an ordinary student, their free time was so little it was pitiful.

Fukiyose stared at Kamijou’s face.

“It’s alright. I’ve already passed on a message to Tsukuyomi-sensei. And in order to cope with unexpected events, there’s a certain amount of free time in my schedule, so there’s no worries!”

“Too bad. How about you leave me alone and go shopping with your friends?”

“There are many ways to create memories. They should be able to understand this!”

Fukiyose only realized that what she said was insensitive after saying those words.

Kamijou, whose collar was still being grabbed, said,

“Okay okay……what you say is correct, but can you please stop pulling me by the collar?”

“Then let’s hold hands.”

Fukiyose unexpectedly let go of Kamijou’s collar, and extended her small hand out. Seemed like she applied some hand cream over her soft hands; it was either the Coenzyme Q10 or some popular health product that was highly

recommended.

“Ah? Erm—then if you don’t mind.”

He hesitated, before holding Fukiyose’s hand. He thought that her hand would be cold, but it was unexpectedly warm. Kamijou felt his heart thumping crazily.

Fukiyose glanced at him.

“You’re too slow.”

“……”

Kamijou, who was lamenting “Why is my heart beating so violently,” was pulled away by the iron wall girl, who was not in the best of spirits.

Part 6

Kamijou was dragged along the street by Fukiyose, who was holding onto his hand.

There were a lot of people there. Maybe it was because it was a place where the subway trains and the automatic buses met. From the train to the bus, from bus route A to bus route B……just like this, the passengers arrived and then proceeded on.

It was quite a distance from where he had gotten separated from Index. Fukiyose seemed intent on bringing Kamijou back to school to cheer for their schoolmates, but he had to get to work once Tsuchimikado and Stiyl, who were searching for Oriana, contacted him. This was bad, what could he do? Kamijou continued to worry on his own.

“Oi, Kamijou, is Daihaseisai really that boring?”

Fukiyose, who was holding hands with Kamijou, suddenly asked.

What?

Kamijou frowned.

“I’ve been feeling that you seem absent-minded, it’s like something’s on your mind.”

Kamijou was startled inside.

Fukiyose stared at Kamijou,

“I can’t force you to focus entirely on Daihaseisai. I can’t stop you if you want out of Daihaseisai.”

From the looks of things, it seemed that Fukiyose was purely suspicious about Kamijou’s concentration, and not that she found out something about Daihaseisai.

“As an organizer of this event who worked so hard for this day, even if it’s just my own stubbornness, I hope that everyone can get some wonderful memories. I’ll be happy if everyone can laugh happily……but you seemed bored today. No matter what, it seems that there are still some shortcomings in my preparations.”

“……Your sense of responsibility is really strong. I’m not feeling bored at all; it’s interesting when everything’s so hectic.”

Kamijou didn’t understand for what reason was Fukiyose a member of the Daihaseisai committee. She was not forced by anyone to be one, and since she had volunteered herself, there must be a reason for her to want this event to succeed.

But she didn’t know.

She didn’t know that there were magicians that wanted to take advantage of her hard work, she didn’t know about the secret plot regarding the ‘Stab Sword’ trade, and she didn’t know about the clash of ideas inside and outside Academy City.

I have to work harder, Kamijou thought.

Not just Fukiyose.

The other committee members wanted to make Daihaseisai a success. The students and the visitors from outside would also like to make wonderful memories out of this event.

Because of this, he had to work harder.

Seeing Kamijou's face like this, Fukiyose gave a surprised look as she stared at him.

"……There is something on your mind."

"Ah? There's nothing! I'm really motivated. Why are you so worried, Fukiyose-san?"

Seeing that Fukiyose looked so down that her glory was all gone, Kamijou panicked and ran in front of her while still holding onto her hand, staring at her face as he said this.

Dong!

He was pushed on the back.

In this busy road, it seemed that someone's shoulder had knocked into him.

Kamijou was knocked forward by this unexpected accident, and because of this, the distance between Kamijou and Fukiyose, who was staring at him, was shrunk in an instant.

The distance between their faces was merely about 30cm.

"GAH……!!"

"Eh……!!"

Just when both of them cried out, the distance between the two became zero. Bong! Kamijou and Fukiyose's foreheads gently knocked into each other. Their noses touched each other, and although their lips didn't meet, Kamijou could feel

her soft breath blowing onto his lips.

(Wha……?)

Kamijou's inadvertently stopped breathing.

"Move away, Kamijou Touma!"

The next moment, BAM! Fukiyose rammed in hard at Kamijou with her head.

"WAH!?"

Kamijou's upper body swung backwards. The hand he was originally holding onto was let loose. He knew that his head was hot. Fukiyose's expression didn't seem to change, but she was becoming more irritated.

"……To think you'll do this even when people are talking to you seriously. You really can't change your habits."

"No……it's not that. I'm really thinking seriously about this situation!!"

"Let me say this to you, I won't reconcile with you ever in this lifetime."

"Uuuuu! Why is Fukiyose-san even colder now!!?"

Kamijou cried out. Fukiyose slapped him hard on the back of his head with her hand. If this was an act of rebuttal, it might be a bit too unaffectionate. Just when Kamijou bent down and gently rubbed the back of his head…

Poof!!

This time, his head hit something rather soft.

After he calmly confirmed it, he realized that it was the breasts of a female.

“WOAAAHHHH!!?”

Kamijou frantically moved backwards. What’s with this sudden series of events!? Facing Kamijou, who was really scared, the female who had collided with him only said “Aiyaya,” and didn’t seem to mind.

Beside Kamijou, Fukiyose gave a low bellow “……Kamijou,” her tone full of vengeance.

The person who had knocked into him was a female, about 18-19 years old, who was wearing plain working clothes. Her age should be similar to Kanzaki Kaori.

She was taller than Kamijou, and although she was tall for a Japanese, after seeing the eye-catching blonde hair and blue eyes, he couldn’t say that this was an accurate guess. Fukiyose was considered to have a rather good body compared to his classmates, but it was lacking in comparison to this lady’s beauty. Not only were the curves of her breasts and waist wicked, she was giving an invisible flirtatious sense.

The lady’s hair seemed to be either curled or waxed, and it seemed like a lot of effort was put into it. She had separated her hair into many small bundles, and curled them using an electric perm, before she tied them into bundles of three. She also put in quite a bit of detail in other small areas, so this should be a hairstyle which she had spent quite some time creating. Although there weren’t any decorations on it, the hair itself looked like a refined gold ornament.

She was most likely a painter, as there was paint all over her uniform. She was holding a 1.5m by 0.7m billboard that was covered by a white cloth. The tip of her fingers barely managed to grab the bottom of the board even after she stretched her other arm.

But.

“Wa……”

The one who cried out wasn’t Kamijou, but Fukiyose, who was right beside him.

The woman was wearing a rather clumsy looking work uniform, but her clothes were wide open. It was not that she didn’t button up the second button, but

rather, ‘beside the second button, all the other buttons were unbuttoned.’ The cleavage of her breasts and navel were wide open for all to see. Kamijou felt that it was like she was wearing a swimsuit.

Her pants were rather loose, and it seemed like they were hanging onto her waist. Although Kamijou didn’t purposely go behind her to confirm it, it was likely that he would see her butt on the loose side of the pants.

Not only was this get up revealing quite a bit, there was also the danger of her clothes dropping off if she moved in the slightest bit. Unlike the busty Anti-Skill nee-san who was dressed up in sports attire, this woman was rather conscious of her wonderful body.

The painter nee-san made a random movement to show her apology with the other hand that was free, and spoke in unexpectedly fluent Japanese.

“Ehyaya. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m not used to so many people around me. Is there any place that’s hurting? Ah, here? Is the back of your head still hurting?”

“Uu… Although this isn’t the case, your warmth has infected my entire body. I really feel like handing myself over to you……”

Seeing Kamijou complaining like this, Fukiyose closed one eye before smashing a fist into the back of Kamijou’s head, causing his head to sink into the breasts of the painter nee-san. That nee-san didn’t shriek, as she gently pushed Kamijou’s head aside, saying,

“Haiz. Let me see, are you alright? You, cannot, fight, on like this forever. It’s rare to have such an activity, so of course you have to make some wonderful memories.”

Wah, Kamijou looked like he was going to cry.

“So magnanimous! So completely different from those girls who bite others and those who give others a punch! I’m about to sink in this warmth!”

“Aiya, to say that you like someone for your own benefit, isn’t this a bit too childish?”

Fukiyose gave a ‘you idiot’ look at Kamijou, while the painter nee-san smiled

and nodded at her.

“Ara ara. That Miss over there, I’m sorry about this.”

Fukiyose looked surprised, and asked,

“Wh……why are you apologizing to me?”

“Because this onee-san seems to be the main reason why you’re so angry, right?”

Hearing this direct adult speech, the girl inadvertently cringed.

Kamijou shouted out, “Watch closely, this is a mature woman; watch and learn, you iron wall girl!”

Fukiyose then gave him an overhead aikido throw, slamming him onto the ground.

“Ah, are you alright? If you still can fight, you should be fine, I guess.”

Seeing the boy pinned onto the ground and the girl pinning him in front, the painter nee-san said this. She then extended her hand out, requesting a handshake with Kamijou.

“This is an apology for knocking into you. Normally, you Japanese would lower your head to apologise, but we normally do this.”

“Ah……that’s how it is?”

“Ara ara. Do I need to give a kiss?”

Poof!! Kamijou did a spit-take.

After trembling for a while, the pure and innocent Kamijou Touma shouted,

“I WANT A KISS!!”

Fukiyose Seiri’s fist instantly smashed into Kamijou’s solar plexus. The painter nee-san stared at him, who was still shaking his head, laughed, and extended her hand out again.

It’d be great if Index were to have such cultured habits and not bite others. Kamijou used his right fist to shake the painter’s hand.

Pacha!!

A wonderful sound was heard, like something fell and broke into pieces.

“Eh?”

The one who made this sound wasn’t Kamijou nor the nee-san, but Fukiyose Seiri, who was staring at them. As both sides understood what happened, they didn’t make any noise.

Kamijou Touma suddenly remembered the power that his right hand had.

The painter nee-san was trying to confirm if anything was broken.

“Ara ara.”

The nee-san tried to force a bitter smile, and failed.

“I should be going back to work. Can I go now?”

She said this, but left before Kamijou and Fukiyose could respond. Though her actions weren’t any different, that regal feeling up till now was now lost.

“……What, she didn’t shake hands with me? Why, Kamijou Touma!?”

“Ah? Maybe she doesn’t want to be friends with you!?”

When he finally snapped back, his head got smacked again.

Deep inside, Fukiyose sighed. She grabbed Kamijou’s hand, wanting to pull him away. At this moment, her cell phone suddenly rang. Seemed like she got a call from a committee member, as Fukiyose started to speak in a formal tone. Hearing her speak so softly, it seemed like something cropped up. Fukiyose stared at Kamijou’s face, then turned to her watch, before saying, “Don’t be late for the ‘Bread Eating Race’!” She left behind this typical committee member sentence, leaving with her cell phone still in her hand. Kamijou looked at her back, and thought as he touched his face that had been punched hard with one

hand.

The thing he just broke, was it ‘magic’ or ‘esper power’?

After thinking about it for a while, Kamijou concluded that it was less likely to be ‘esper power’. The espers in Academy City were all students. During Daihaseisai, they would be participating in competitions. Of course, he couldn’t make this conclusion easily because there were exceptions like Tsuchimikado Maika. But the dress up of the painter, just looking at the label of the company gave a sense that it was an ‘outsider retailer’. He had an impression on it because it was a name he had seen in television advertisements. Of course, students in Academy City would have no chance to wear clothes like that.

So that meant……

Kamijou Touma took out his phone, and scanned around to see if Fukiyose was still there. It would be troublesome if any Anti-Skill or Judgment members were to take action, so he didn’t want her to hear this. He then proceeded to press Tsuchimikado Motoharu’s number.

“Har Low. Kami-yan, have you tricked Index properly nya? We were checking security loopholes that Oriana may use as a trading point, there’s quite a lot in District 7. So please don’t let Index near—”

“Wait a minute, can I check with you something, Tsuchimikado?”

Tsuchimikado seemed to have realized that Kamijou’s tone sounded urgent, and lowered his tone,

“……What do you want to ask?”

“It’s that thing. We’re trying to prevent the deal of that tool……er, the whatever sword, it’s our objective, right?”

Kamijou looked back at the crowd, and could still see the back of that woman who was wearing loose work clothes.

“It’s the ‘Stab Sword’. Also, it’s not a tool, but a spiritual armament. Eh, what now? You chickening out, Kami-yan? But there’s no other reinforcements besides us, you know.”

“Really?”

“What’s that supposed to mean, Kami-yan?”

Kamijou straightened his back, trying not to lose sight of the woman. But the woman was turning around the corner.

“When I shook hands with someone, the Imagine Breaker seems to have broken something. I don’t know what it was, but the person doesn’t look like a student. From her attire, I’m guessing she’s from outside Academy City.”

“Wait a second, Kami-yan. Let me ask a question. Is that person holding some large baggage? The ‘Stab Sword’ is 1.5 meters long, and each side of the cross guard is 35 centimeters. If anyone is to try and hide such a large sword……what would that person use? It can’t possibly fit into a luggage bag.”

Hearing Tsuchimikado’s words, Kamijou turned green.

“She’s holding it.”

“Holding what?”

“She’s holding a billboard. That woman is carrying a billboard like thing that’s covered in white cloth……”

“Kami-yan, where are you right now?”

“Eh? Wait a sec…… in front of the Bank of Ichizai.”

After saying a ‘Wait for me there,’ Tsuchimikado hung up the phone.

Seeing the phone which was cut off, Kamijou wondered whether he should chase after the woman or wait there for Tsuchimikado. After thinking about it for a while, he decided to dash towards where the woman had disappeared. They’d definitely lose her if he waited till Tsuchimikado arrived.

Kamijou had a premonition that some things were going to occur.

He thought about it at the same time, and it was not something to be happy about.

Part 7

The blonde lady wearing loose clothing tucked the large billboard underneath her armpit as she moved through the crowd. At the same time, she felt aware of herself. Although she had to admit that she noticed what she was doing, her feelings were unable to handle anything that was unplanned for completely.

The lady placed her empty hand into the pocket of her pants. At this moment, her pants dropped slightly, but she didn't seem to mind. She pulled out something from her pocket. It was flash cards used for memorizing English words, but there was nothing written on them. It was just thick white pieces of paper passed through a metal ring.

"Ugh……"

The lady bit a card with her teeth, and pulled it from the metal ring. At that moment, words appeared on the paper like it was litmus paper. In print font, the yellow words 'Water Symbol' appeared on the card. They were written in yellow ink and were in English.

The lady put the other flash cards back into her pocket, and placed the card she was biting on near her ear, like a seashell.

"Ah-ah, hello hello. I'm Oriana Thomson. Can anyone hear me? Please respond."

Though it seemed like she was talking to herself, the flash card that was near her ear transmitted a voice that was so soft it didn't seem to vibrate the air at all.

"Don't say your name aloud. Be careful, your voice may be heard throughout the surroundings. It'll be more difficult if your real identity is exposed."

It sounded serious.

Hearing this, the woman named Oriana bitterly laughed, and said,

“I’m already in trouble now. This onee-chan prefers an improvisational performance. But this isn’t a situation you’ll like, right, Lidvia Lorenzetti?”

The other person on the phone, the one identified as Lidvia, remained silent for a while,

“Don’t speak to me in such a wretched expression. For religious reasons, I can’t keep in line with your tone.”

“I guess. To a nun who likes to use endurance to cause people to panic, it’s hard on you to punish others verbally. Do you know? The illusions of the angels that those martyred Saints saw before their deaths may be seen as an abuse of ecstasy from the viewpoint of science.”

“……”

“Aiya? Don’t tell me you don’t like to hear anything from science’s viewpoint? You’re the type that’ll check for those who are rejecting the Word when you’re using mass psychology?”

“……The one that’s mindful is actually you……”

Hearing the other party say this, Oriana unhappily kept quiet. She was starting to panic, as this call would be meaningless if this kept up.

“Is it that I played with a bit too much fire, Missy? Then this onee-chan will apologize to you now.”

“I remember that you’re younger than me.”

“Even so, you’re still a Missy. No matter how old you are, you’re still a Missy. Isn’t the greatest wish of a nun to age while retaining the identity of a Missy?”

“To people who advocate the Gospel to the poor, it’s inappropriate to call someone older a Missy. You must have received the word of the Bible, once a nun becomes a member of God’s family—”

You’re going to nag on? Oriana sighed.

A typical Roman Catholic, Lidvia Lorenzetti would get emotional the moment she started to talk about praying to God or the truths about spreading the Gospel.

Oriana listened to her nagging without paying attention, as she tried to find an opportune time to butt in.

“Then, regarding this trouble that I was talking about just now……”

“—We nuns are the brides of God, thus having a relationship with others is like being disobedient to God……what I want to say is……”

“Maybe another time.”

Oriana simply changed the topic,

“Basically, the spell that this onee-chan cast on herself is now broken.”

That spell.

The name of it was "**Silent Coin**".[6]

The spell that Oriana used was used to ensure her safety. It was a spell that absorbed the mentality ‘to chase after her’ from her pursuers. It was useless when one was facing her in a conversation, but by turning her back on the other party, the other party would feel, ‘there’s no reason to call her,’ ‘I’ll talk to her next time,’ and not call her. It was constructed as an application of the people clearing field.

While this spell was working, even if Oriana was holding a fireball or anything dangerous in her hand, ‘nobody would want to call her.’ Because of this, she was able to carry out the plan and the ‘deal’.

But for some reason, Oriana was unable to reconstruct that spell that had been broken.

“Then what’s the reason?”

“I don’t know.”

“Any countermeasures?”

“I have no idea either.”

“……”

“Oi, don’t hang up the phone! This nee-chan has no interest in sinking and drowning in this painful silence.”

“Then what will you do now? Come up with a countermeasure?”

“About this……”

Oriana Thomson chuckled.

“……First, I have to get away from that little kid behind me.”

Part 8

In front of Kamijou Touma, the lady in workers’ clothes—likely to be the courier, Oriana Thomson—turned at a corner.

(……Have I been found out!?)

Anyway, he couldn’t lose her. Kamijou gave up on stalking her, something he was not good at anyway, and started to run among the crowd. He didn’t know whether there was a television interview somewhere, as this path wasn’t crowded with people.

He ran along the building, and turned around the right-angled corner.

Kamijou could see the blonde hair swaying about in a location further than he expected. He passed through a child holding a balloon and a couple holding hands, and began to speed up. He thought,

(Luckily, I’m wearing sportswear for the competitions.)

Although these clothes weren’t made from some high-tech material that used aviation mechanics to reduce the air-resistance, it was better than the school pants.

Though he was trying his best to run hard, nobody was looking at him like a weirdo. The pedestrians may have thought that he was in the Borrowing Race. He was moving faster now, and he was 1 kilometer away from where he had collided with the blonde lady and split up with Fukiyose.

Not to mention that Botany test field where Index was changing clothes, it was now bothersome for him to even walk back.

A cell phone ring could be heard from Kamijou’s pants.

It’d be tiring if he talked while he was running. Kamijou wondered if he should answer the phone as he was keeping his eyes on the target. The caller was Tsuchimikado Motoharu.

He hastily picked up the phone.

“Kami-yan, where are you!? Why aren’t you waiting for me there!?”

“Sorry, I’m afraid that I’ll lose her if this keeps up!”

As they were talking, the figure wearing worker clothes turned again at a corner 20 meters in front.

“Bastard, where now? Where are you right now?”

Turning around the corner, Kamijou gave a low moan. The street in front was split into 3 different alleys. He pricked his ears, and could hear where the footsteps were headed. It was the middle alley.

“The location……There’s no road sign around!! I’ll send my GPS password to you through SMS. Look for me there!!”

The GPS function of the cell phone had a service of ‘showing where one’s friend was,’ but they had to use the special password sent over by the target. The code

would change automatically every 30 minutes.

Kamijou sent the required code to Tsuchimikado's phone, and hung up. Of course, the power must remain on in order to allow the GPS function to work properly.

He continued to run in the alley. This stretch was really long, as the small space between the towers soon became a gradual arc. Rushing forward, he finally heard the voices of the crowd and their footsteps in front.

"Eh!!"

Running out of the alley, he found another road. Kamijou looked around, before spotting Oriana running away on the right side of a trail that extended to both left and right of him.

The distance was rather long now, about 50 meters. It was pretty fast for her to run while holding such a large billboard (or it's disguised as one, it should be something else though, right?).

Kamijou frantically chased after Oriana.

Luckily, the billboard of hers was rather large, and obvious, so she couldn't mix into the crowd easily. In this situation, Kamijou would lose sight of her the moment he lost a teeny-weeny bit of concentration, meaning that he had to focus on her. This psychological thought narrowed Kamijou's vision, as not only did he nearly knock into the people walking around, he didn't notice the unevenness of the ground and nearly fell down.

"Damn it!!"

Kamijou shouted out. As he was about to run forward, someone tapped him on his shoulder.

It was Tsuchimikado Motoharu and Stiyl Magnus.

They were fast.

They hadn't chased him from behind; they had come out from the side alleys. It was likely that after they had looked at the GPS map, they guessed where

Kamijou would be from looking at where Kamijou was and where he was running.

“Which one, Kami-yan? You just said that the ‘Stab Sword’ was disguised as a billboard, right?”

“It’s that……that person……that blonde lady wearing workers’ clothes.”

Tsuchimikado and Stiyl then proceeded to run where Kamijou was pointing at. The reason why they left him behind was because they’d say that it was the work of the experts now. But Kamijou didn’t bother adjusting his breathing as he proceeded to run after Stiyl and the rest.

(Cheh, they’re tough……!)

Oriana muttered as she continued to run while glancing backwards. Though the distance between them was about 50 meters, conversely, they only needed to run 50 meters in order to catch up to her. She continued to run, and ran into several alleys where it would be easy for them to get lost, as she tried to shake them off, but there didn’t seem to be any effect.

The reason why she was disguised as a painter holding a billboard was because she wanted people to think that she was ‘working’. No matter whether it was a hotel, department store, or a restaurant, if there was no billboard, others would think that ‘she’s here to rest in the shop.’ She’d be questioned by the employees if she walked into a shop together with the customers like this. Even if they were to ask for an explanation, she wouldn’t have time to reply. She’d be noticed if she got away from the employees several times.

Even if she disguised herself as a worker and walked in from the back door, she’d need keys and an ID card. Thus, she could only run on the streets outside. This was one of the reasons why she couldn’t shake them off though.

Even so, with this distance, it was abnormal for the other party to catch up with her so accurately.

And, the moment she turned back, the number of people chasing after her was now three!

The first one looked like an amateur, but the precision required now had

increased by a lot now that two more people were chasing her. They were likely experts. The opponent should have read her trail of thoughts and predicted how she was going to escape.

(Although I heard that Academy City and various Christian organisations cannot take action on these busy streets now, it seems that I was too naïve……!)

Suddenly, Oriana stopped moving. There seemed to be a television broadcasting crew doing an interview ahead, as there was quite a group of people around. Oriana, who was holding the large ‘billboard’, was unable to pass through. The billboard was jammed inside the crowd, and she couldn’t move about freely. Of course, she could abandon the billboard, but doing so would defeat the entire objective as to why she was running about with it.

She looked around, and thought,

(Although it’s difficult, looks like that road is the safest……)

After thinking, calculating and making a decision, Oriana ran onto another road on the side.

Tsuchimikado was running the fastest, and was followed by Stiyl, then Kamijou. That was because Kamijou had used up quite a bit of energy, as he should be running faster than Stiyl.

Right now, Oriana, who was 30 meters in front, stopped in the middle of the road. Looking around, she decided to run into another road on the side. Tsuchimikado frowned as he ran,

“What now, it’s different from her usual modus operandi nya……did she change her mind?”

He continued to maintain his breathing as he ran after her, feeling that he’d lose her if there was a slight error. Kamijou increased the power of his legs as well as he chased after Tsuchimikado.

Arriving at where Oriana had stopped just now, they found out that there was a broadcasting agency carrying out an interview. One could hear the reporter reporting the news excitedly, and to the residents of Academy City, it seemed that he was confusing the situation. The people around him were packed together

as if he was in a train. Oriana must be afraid of getting blocked by them, so she changed her direction.

Kamijou's view turned towards Oriana.

"……Where is this place, a bus depot?"

It was an empty place with asphalt on the ground.

It was an enclosed rectangular area that was surrounded on all sides. It seemed like they had bulldozed and leveled the abandoned buildings that had originally been there in preparing for Daihaseisai.

It was 30 meters wide, and several hundred meters long. There was no impression of it being 'wide', though. Many large buses were stacked tightly together like oil tankers. At first glance, there were about 50–70 of these buses. There were metal pillars everywhere, and the entire place was covered with a galvanized iron roof. There were robotic arms that were used in car repairs hanging from the ceiling.

All the vehicles were unmanned automatic buses.

It should be a temporary depot for automatic buses. There had to be a place to refuel the buses, to wash them, and do repairs when needed. Maybe they were using a three-shift rotation system or some other measures during this period. So all the buses here were on standby.

The automatic buses were only in use during Daihaseisai, and such a large amount of preparation was done for this. Kamijou re-realized the scale of this operation.

An auto-bus marked as 'return' silently passed by Kamijou and company into the depot. Tsuchimikado followed the auto-bus that was slowly moving, and just as he was about to step silently into the depot—

BOOM!!

Suddenly, blue and white explosions occurred underneath the ceiling.

The unnaturally-colored flame continued to fall directly onto Tsuchimikado's

face like a transparent cylinder. It may be a magical attack — although it was a magical flame, it was definitely not caused by Stiyl. If so, who did this?

“Bastard, is she trying to stop us by using runes? Get down, Kami-yan!”

Tsuchimikado jumped backwards, and was about to push Kamijou down, but—

“What are you saying? Shouldn’t we be relying on him in this kind of situation?”

Stiyl grabbed Kamijou’s collar and tossed him in front.

“Ah?”

Tsuchimikado rolled sideways, not knowing how far he would roll, and in place, Kamijou was standing under the blue and white flames.

Looking up, Kamijou saw a flaming pillar that was coming down like a guillotine swinging downwards.

“Eh? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?? AHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!”

Kamijou frantically swung his right hand up like a hook. The blue and white flames dispersed in many different directions, and vanished before it could spread.

Stiyl shook the cigarette in his mouth, and said,

“My my, to think that even I couldn’t think of this perfect teamwork. To be able to share the work like this, you can really understand the situation and take action.”

“You……you……you……!!”

Kamijou was trembling, and without hesitation, was about to hit the red-haired priest.

“Hurry up and finish your work.”

Stiyl kicked him, and pushed him backwards.

PEW!! The sound of wind being cut could be heard, as blocks of rocks that were

as big as baseballs passed through the underside of the auto-bus that was moving forward. Suddenly, the surface of these rocks became sharp and edgy, like a sea-urchin, as they bounced up towards Kamijou's jaw.

"Wait……wait a sec!!"

Kamijou quickly stretched his right hand out, and the rock bullets vanished in the air like an ice sculpture breaking. Tsuchimikado and Stiyl were using the auto-bus parked nearby as a shield, and jumped away left and right respectively. Kamijou, who was unable to trust them any further, jumped in Tsuchimikado's direction.

Tsuchimikado, whose back was resting on the bus, said to Stiyl, who was leaning his back on the bus opposite,

"Stiyl, stay here, set up the runes, and stand by. I'll catch the courier inside."

"Roger that. Do I have to use the people clearing field?"

"I'll leave it to you. Though I don't want to use too much magic, it'll be bad if this uproar is to build on. It's alright as long as Index doesn't arrive here."

I see, Kamijou just realized this. Right now, they weren't fighting in a 'win or lose' battle, but a war about 'arrest or escape'. Once the objectives were different, the ways to tackle it were different.

Tsuchimikado stared at Kamijou's face, and asked,

"Oh yeah, Kami-yan. What do you want to do? I feel that it's safer for you to stay here……"

Stiyl stared at Kamijou, and grinned,

"Yeah, to me, it's better if you stay here. Not for your safety, but mine."

Kamijou picked up an empty can on the ground, and threw it at Stiyl, wanting to proceed on with Tsuchimikado. From a blind corner of the bus, Tsuchimikado stared inside the depot, and dashed out.

Kamijou followed him, thinking, if I have the Imagine Breaker, shouldn't I be

using myself as a shield?

BOOM!!

As this sound was heard, a yellow flame flew towards them. 10 meters in front, a flame appeared out of nowhere.

Right when Kamijou stretched out his right hand, a high pressure wind cut between the buses on the left and right side of him like a scalpel.

“!?”

Just when Kamijou was unable to respond, Tsuchimikado grabbed his collar, avoided the scalpels that were flying over, and ran in an arc to avoid the flames. He then let go of Kamijou’s collar, and said,

“Kami-yan, you don’t have to take them all on! These are traps that the enemy set up. She’ll escape if you take them on seriously!!”

“Although you say that……!!”

Five blocks of ice that were as big as balloons came descending from the ceiling. Kamijou tried hard to resist using his right hand as he dashed forward. The shockwaves and sounds created by the heavy blocks of ice landing caused him to feel chilly on his back.

Passing through a row of parked auto-buses, he saw a large machine that was used to wash the buses. It was about as tall as two stories of a building, and there were machines that were used for washing. It was not those drum-shaped brushes, but rather a flat sponge that used ultrasonic vibration.

Oriana seemed to have ran into a dark corner, and he could see her blonde hair swaying about.

“Over there!!”

When Kamijou jumped out from the blind corner, the ground started to uplift in a row, as if it was trying to get in between him and the huge washing machine. It was a 5 meter tall ground wall, and it swept his legs over like a tsunami.

The wall extended from one end of the depot to another. This was unavoidable, as he'd be crushed even if he hid behind a blind corner. What was more dangerous was that if the metal pillar supporting the ceiling was broken, the entire depot would collapse.

"Kami-yan, I'll leave it to you. It's some provisional material that's like ectoplasm. Your right hand will definitely settle it!!"

As Tsuchimikado shouted out, Kamijou came forward. Facing this large target, his teeth started to clatter, but it was not the time to run away crying. He reached the base of the wall, and hit it with his right hand.

POW!!

With the sound of glass breaking, the 5 meter tall wall collapsed. The wall seemed to have dissolved in the air, and there didn't seem to be any changes. The asphalt ground returned to its original state as well.

Kamijou was about to pull back his right arm when Tsuchimikado ran past him to the place opposite the large washing machine.

He stopped.

Oriana wasn't there anymore.

A thick piece of paper that was as big as a chewing gum wrapper was stuck on the body of the machine. Kamijou rushed past Tsuchimikado, and looked around. There was a backdoor in the corner of the machine, but further down, a manhole was opened, and the windows of the buildings were broken. Basically, it was impossible to tell which way she escaped.

"'Route Disturb' Oriana Thomson huh……what a joke!!"

Tsuchimikado angrily tore down the piece of paper. The ordinary boy Kamijou Touma could tell from his actions how critical the situation was.

(Ara ara. I don't know if I lost them……)

Oriana Thomson looked behind for a while, and walked on the road.

She had stopped running the moment she lost sight of her pursuers. Since the opponent lost her, it was more important that she was not found than to put distance between them. It'd be very obvious if she was to run in the crowd.

Even so, she was rather satisfied. Oriana held on to the billboard that was covered with white cloth, and reconfirmed everything again.

(……Even if I lost them for now, it doesn't mean that the matter is over. I have to set up the next piece.)

Oriana, who was only caring about what was happening behind, knocked into someone in front. Her exposed navel felt not human skin, but metal. Two boys that seemed to be committee members of the Daihaseisai were setting a pole horizontally for a ball tossing contest, and she had knocked into them.

"Aiya, I'm really sorry."

Oriana gently apologized and left, leaving the boys dumbfounded as they stared at her huge breasts.

Too soft, she said softly, forcing back the urge to laugh.

(I've just set up my next piece, it'll likely give them some hell.)

Tsuchimikado had pulled out his phone and was talking to someone. It seemed to be Stiyl. Although both of them were magicians,

Tsuchimikado couldn't use magic, or strictly speaking, he could use it, but it'd cause a rejection due to his esper powers, which was the risk of a small-scale explosion.

Tsuchimikado said "come quickly," and hung up the phone.

Kamijou looked at the piece of paper that Tsuchimikado was holding.

"Oi, what's that?"

"Oh, that's the spiritual item that Oriana uses."

Tsuchimikado said in a frustrated tone, and let Kamijou see that paper. Some blue colored words were written on it in a hard to read font, ‘Soil Symbol.’ Of course, Kamijou, whose English was atrocious, didn’t understand what it meant.

“It means, ‘the Symbol of Soil.’ You’ve probably heard of the five main elements in RPGs, nya? Fire, water, earth, wind, whatever. It’s referring to that.”

“So this is a ‘Soil card’? I don’t understand.”

“No, not only that. The color of earth is ‘green’, but this is written in blue.”

Tsuchimikado turned the card around, saying,

“‘Blue’ is the color of water, and normally, it wouldn’t be used on earth-based magic. If one wanted to use earth, they’d put matching features like ‘green’ or ‘disc-shaped’. It’s like how Stiyl uses red cards to control flames.”

“……Did that woman make a mistake?”

“Impossible, she’s doing this on purpose. She’s using incompatible colors and uses the reaction as an attack. Basically, this is risky, as a bad mix will result in a bad effect.”

As Tsuchimikado said this, Stiyl ran over from the other side of the depot.

Tsuchimikado waved the thick piece of paper, and said,

“I found her magical spirit tool. If Oriana is to use this while she’s running, this will receive it like a cell phone. I’d like to use this method, can you guys give me a hand, nya?”

Part 9

Tsuchimikado Motoharu could not use magic.

Strictly speaking, if he used it, he'd lose control of his body. As the human body wasn't numerical, it couldn't decide how many times could he endure it. He may endure it up to 4, 5 times, or he may die in one use.

It was like playing Russian Roulette; there was a chance where he would die. In this situation where he was uncertain, Tsuchimikado was trying his best not to use it. If he was to end up being unable to take action, one could expect what would happen after that.

Thus, Tsuchimikado was unable to use the 'Seeking Magic'.

He placed the thick piece of paper that Oriana had left behind on the floor, and drew a perfect circle around it. He then positioned many different colored papers, and that was all. Basically, it was Stiyl's job to activate it.

"The name of the spell is the '**All-Around Reality Circle**' — it would have been easy if I used it during the Angel Fall incident nya…… At that time, in order to prevent any interference, I only used a single protection spell, and got damaged really badly. Kanzaki nee-chan isn't good at setting up a boundary either, so it was really troublesome. Of course, I couldn't have possibly taught this to the important figures of the Russian Orthodox Church……"

"Stop yapping and start working. I heard that the effective range is about a 3 kilometer radius?"

"Ah, to interrupt me like this. Ahhh, Kami-yan, please move away bit. What if your right hand breaks this 'All-Around Reality Circle'?"

Hearing Tsuchimikado mention this, Kamijou frantically backpedaled. Tsuchimikado continued to make some markings on the ground, and after he was done, moved back to where Kamijou was.

A black circle with approximately 50cm in diameter was drawn on the ground, and the piece of paper that Oriana had stuck on the bus washing machine. The blue, white, red and black pieces of paper divided the circle into four equal quadrants, each set at 90 degrees. Seemed like this was to represent north, south, east and west.

Stiyl knelt halfway down in front of the circle that Tsuchimikado had drawn, clapped his two hands together, and closed his eyes. A drop of sweat flowed

down his forehead.

“—IITIAWHAIICTTPIOA (Through the wind, but not through air, but to convey thy will).”

As he recited this, the four pieces of paper started to float in the air. Like a clumsy puppet being pulled by invisible strings, the colored paper stood up. The edges of the pieces of colored paper reminded one of the sharp edge of a sword blade.

“This so-called rune is the idea of magic by adding and removing colors.”

Tsuchimikado stared at the circle on the ground, saying,

“First, one has to imprint something that’s of significance, and forcefully input some energy to activate the spell, and deactivate it by removing the stains. For Stiyl, he uses ‘pre-prepared dyed cards’ that were printed, so the spell activates extremely fast. When the card ‘burns’, the removal of the color will be over in an instant nya. So normally, people will use spells that ‘are pre-prepared’……”

The four pieces of paper continued to draw a spiral. The papers continued to draw a line that was of the same color. The line continued to get closer and closer, and the circle got smaller and smaller, as they got closer to the middle, where the card that Oriana had left behind was.

“As long as we follow the basic rule of ‘adding and removing colors’, even if it’s Futtark, which doesn’t follow the normal regulations, one can activate a rune spell nya. In fact, different types of ‘rune words’ formed during different ages.”

—There was only 15cm to the center of the circle.

Kamijou stared at the fast rotating pieces of paper.

“If we use this, we can accurately determine where Oriana is?”

“Um. If we use it, we should be able to determine it in a 3 kilometer radius. However, we won’t get anything if she leaves the perimeter.”

“……3 kilometers. It’s rather far. But if we find her at exactly 3 kilometers from here, wouldn’t the enemy move somewhere else?”

“One more thing. After activating the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’, it’ll take fifteen minutes for us to set it up. However, it’s no problem if it works once.”

Tsuchimikado said this, but if they failed……

“Although 15 minutes sounds short, wouldn’t it be bad if the opponent takes a bus or tram?”

“I don’t care where she runs off to. Kami-yan, have you forgotten? I’m a magician too. Don’t I have the Red Spell as my last resort? Although I only have one shot.”

—There was now only 10cm to the center.

Kamijou revealed an irritated look, and said,

“What you are talking about……is that the gimmick that you used to bomb my house from the seaside resort to prevent that Angel Fall? It’s alright if we can use such a long range strike……wait a minute, if everyone knows about how someone used magic brazenly in Academy City, wouldn’t the many magicians waiting outside be using this as an excuse to invade?”

“No, they won’t. Kami-yan, because their excuse is to ‘protect ordinary civilians from those bad magicians that invaded Academy City.’ As long as we settle this with a single strike, take the ‘Stab Sword’ back, and announce that ‘the danger is gone, so we don’t need your help,’ isn’t it alright nya?”

—5cm left.

Tsuchimikado grinned at Kamijou, and said,

“Even so, I’m not comfortable with solving this as a magician. So I used that Red Spell, and not my specialty, the Black Spell nya. If anyone was to ask who was the one who used magic, I'd just lie to that guy and say that it was Stiyl, the fire manipulator, who launched the strike.”

“……That……that is a bit too bold. Can you really trick them like that?”

“I can. Because Necessarius is keeping the knowledge of 103,000 grimoires. It’s not weird for them to even learn spells that are not of Christian origin. Stiyl’s

runes themselves have no relation to Christianity. However, they can't use these spells the Eastern way, so they have to refine it such that it looks Western."

"……"

"What's with your expression? Anyway, we win if we can confirm Oriana's position. The ideal case is if we can capture her, and force her to talk about Lidvia's deal with this other party. Right now, the main priority is to prevent the deal of the 'Stab Sword' from taking place. In other words, it'll be alright even if we blow up the 'Stab Sword' or Oriana to pieces."

—The distance was now 0cm.

The four pieces of paper touched the thick piece of paper that Oriana left. With a crisp 'BAM!' sound, the pieces of colored paper were flying all over the place, drawing an intricate map quickly on the ground. At first it was as blurred as a camera with the lens not at the focal length, then it gradually became clearer.

This map showed everything, from the roads, constructs, trees, benches, vending machines, and wind generators, to each and every single empty can on the ground. Maybe it was more accurate to call it an ultra-high resolution photo taken from a satellite than a simplified or marked map.

Finally, the place that appeared was……

Oriana looked up suddenly.

With one hand, she was holding a billboard-like thing that was covered with a white cloth. She slightly raised her ample breasts, as if she was trying to add to the pressure on the second button, which was the only button she had buttoned. She looked up at the sky.

In the late September blue sky, there was white smoke from the fireworks that were fired, and one could feel the cool breeze in this ruthless summer. The mottled clouds continued to move in the same direction, and everything seemed calm.

Even so, Oriana's skin felt a sharp sense of tension.

It was like trying to get into a bank that had been overrun by robbers and strongly fortified.

Oriana Thomson started to take some time to wonder what was approaching her.

“—Through the wind, but not through air, but to convey thy will — this onee-chan heard that, you know.”

Then, she cracked a smile.

“Roar……kakakakakkakakakakkakakakaka—!?”

Suddenly, Stiyl seemed to be hit by something in the chest, as he bent forward.

Picha! The map on the ground was scattered around like how someone sneezes and blows a sand painting away. A loud breaking sound could be heard, and Kamijou was so scared that he instantly took a deep breath, wondering if Stiyl’s bones were broken.

“This is a space-bending sound due to him losing control of his magic power — it’s just the sound of air molecules colliding with each other! Kami-yan, hit Stiyl’s body! It’ll probably stop!!”

Hearing Tsuchimikado call out like this, Kamijou was shocked. Anyway, it was rather scary when ‘he didn’t know what was going on.’ Kamijou rushed to Stiyl and frantically smacked his back that was bent. As he was thinking about doing this fast, he forgot to adjust his power.

Suddenly, the sound of air being depressed was heard.

Stiyl relaxed his body as he lay on the ground, but the strange situation seemed to be over, and he couldn’t hear that sound just now. Stiyl panted heavily, and finally pulled his hand away from his sweaty hair—

“What’s this? Is this……some spell to prevent being snuffed out……?”

The pieces of colored paper weren’t moving anymore, so Tsuchimikado picked one of them up with his fingers, placed his fingers on the paper, and folded several creases on it.

“If so, since I used the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’, I should be affected as well……but there’s no such phenomenon.”

He waved the neatly folded colored paper, and said,

“Stiyl’s magic power must have been read by the opponent, and the opponent probably used an interception spell that would cause a reaction in Stiyl. That Oriana, I thought that she suddenly decided to counterattack, so this is her goal. She’s trying to force us to use our magic, read and analyze our magic power, and set up a magic circle that sends signals nya.”

Kamijou did not understand what Tsuchimikado, who was folding the paper, was talking about, as he extended his hand out to Stiyl. Stiyl irritatedly waved Kamijou’s hand away, and swaggered as he tried to stand up.

Stiyl spat onto the ground.

“Is it a spell that identifies a person and seals him up? Really, to think that she could come up with that.”

“……What’s that? You mean it can target Stiyl and attack him directly?”

Tsuchimikado sighed.

“This thing called magic power……because of the approach of the caster, the quality and quantity will be different……but, I don’t think that this is enough to create a perfect counterattack nya.”

As he spoke, Tsuchimikado placed his hand into his pocket, and pulled out a red pen……or maybe it isn’t.

According to his explanation, this thing called magic was like gasoline. It was originally like the gasoline that we rely on so heavily, and was refined heavily through sects or religions like an oil processor.

“For Stiyl, if he were using the Aztec method to train his magic power, the type of magic power formed will be vastly different. Like using crude oil, one cannot refine it into gasoline, but into heavy oil and light oil nya.”

Tsuchimikado said.

For an Amakusa Saint like Kanzaki Kaori, besides Christianity, there was still some essence of Buddhism and Shintoism. So they could freely adjust the type of magic power and quality of the spell according to the situation.

What Tsuchimikado was suggesting was that, to Oriana, in order to take on Stiyl himself, she'd try and grasp what type of magic power that he could possibly use, and try her best to focus on sealing Stiyl's magic. It was hard to imagine Oriana having peace of mind now, as she probably didn't have all the information about Stiyl's power. No matter his strength, one would normally consider about that.

"That……Oriana, what did she do?"

"About this……I guess, it should be something like this."

As he spoke, Stiyl stood up, his legs still wobbly.

"This thing called magic power has multiple forms of existence. But the previous stage is no longer the same. The methods we can use to refine this talent will be dependent on religion, spells, and one's own lifeforce. After that, it's like a math problem. As long as one calculates it backwards, the answer will be arrived at."

Imagine if there was 20 pounds of magic power A, and a way to process magic power called B. By comparing the two, if a person used the magic procession B needed to process 20 pounds of magic power, how many pounds of this lifeforce would be required—this way, one could calculate the original 'lifeforce'.

Stiyl irritatedly pulled out a cigarette stick from a pack with his mouth, and stared at Tsuchimikado. Tsuchimikado was using something like a red pen to draw some markings on the colored paper in his hand.

"In order to overcome this situation, I'm making a new circle."

Tsuchimikado told Kamijou, still focusing on the paper.

Stiyl's gaze returned to Kamijou.

"Although magic power doesn't have a personality, lifeforce does. In other words, my lifeforce was read by Oriana. Bastard, I shouldn't have set up the rune

cards so easily……no, if the opponent is using an underground large-scale interrogation facility for magicians, like the Tower of London or the basement of Windsor Castle, it's still possible. To think that it's possible for a magician to be able to do every single step—research, analysis, reverse calculation, application, and engagement all by herself—as expected of the Route Disturb, Oriana Thomson."

Said Stiyl unhappily as he pulled out a matchstick, a rare sight, and struck it against the soles of his shoe. It was likely that he was wary of using magic to light a stick. Right now, he couldn't strike back, and could only wait for Tsuchimikado to finish his preparations. For such a man who had such a high self-esteem to 'be cautious', one could see how unfathomable Oriana was. Hearing him say this, during the battle at the depot, Stiyl had been the only one who used 'magic' outright.

"If she's doing a reverse calculation and counterattacking, the one hurt should have been Tsuchimikado, who set up the 'All-Around Reality Circle'. Since nothing like that happened, I guess it reacted to my lifeforce."

Stiyl continued. Tsuchimikado was working hard on some weird project, so only Kamijou and Stiyl were conversing with each other.

"Which means, that Oriana can still analyze Stiyl's magic power while she's escaping?"

Kamijou tilted his head, not knowing what was going on.

Seeing Kamijou like this, Stiyl couldn't help but blow out some smoke irritatedly. Maybe it was because he lost his cool after being damaged, or maybe he felt that it was troublesome to talk about things that were straightforward to magicians.

"If she knows this move, then it should be even more potent……than your right hand."

He inhaled some smoke deeply.

"Oriana's interception spell……which is on par with those spells used for execution, requires a magic circle — no, something that's even higher than it. Oriana didn't just use a spell, she set up an entire area of effect. It's like setting

up a high-speed computer, and letting it do all the analysis. This way, Oriana can focus on running away, but……”

“But what?”

When Kamijou said this, Stiyl replied in a bitter voice,

“……No, maybe I’m thinking too much. I feel that I have seen this inhuman ‘automatic processing’ before……no way. Even if she’s Oriana, she can’t possibly have that……”

It was like he was muttering to himself.

Kamijou, who didn’t understand the situation at all, frowned. Tsuchimikado, who was beside them, was drawing something on the paper. He opened his mouth, and grinned.

“No, Stiyl, I’m thinking the same thing as you.”

“Really? …If so, it would explain why Oriana is able to let it work despite being someplace else. But if so, she’s not a magician, but a sorcerer.”

“Aiya, is this really the case? I always felt that there was something wrong about Oriana. If she’s really a sorceror, there should be some magicians whom she taught that will act as her underlings. Shouldn’t that be something that Lidvia should be doing?”

As he spoke, Tsuchimikado continued to create markings on the colored paper. It was like a marking was add on another marking.

“??? What is *that*?”

The two magicians continued to mutter among themselves, causing the amateur Kamijou to be confused. Seeing Kamijou like this, Tsuchimikado gently smiled.

“Oh yeah, Kami-yan probably hasn’t seen an actual situation. But, just having knowledge of it means that you know it. By stuffing any knowledge related to magic into someone, the knowledge will form a magic circle without the caster’s will. Even if the caster doesn’t use magic, it’ll cause the ‘power’ released by nature and lifeforce to multiply, making it active semi-permanently.”

Tsuchimikado's smile now had a deeper meaning.

The lens of the blue sunglasses were reflecting light.

"You still don't understand? It's the person closest to Kami-yan nya. 'That' Index that memorized 103,000 grimoires, isn't she with you?"

103,000.

Index.

Even if he didn't understand completely what Tsuchimikado meant, he knew what that referred to.

"No way?"

"That's right, Kami-yan."

Facing Kamijou, who was muttering right now, Tsuchimikado gently shook the colored paper in his hand, and casually said.

"**An original grimoire.**"

An original.

A book that had the secrets of magic. At first glance, it didn't look impressive, but any ordinary human would get a nervous breakdown if they just read the contents only. Also, the chapters, paragraphs and words of the book would become a semi-permanent magic circle that would automatically counterattack if anyone was to try and destroy it.

Nobody had the power to destroy an 'original' grimoire, so they could only use emergency measures to temporarily seal it. This was why people like Index, who had memorized 103,000 grimoires in her head, and Orsola Aquinas, who tried to analyze the original Book of the Law, did this to counter these dangerous grimoires.

Kamijou was a complete novice when it came to magic. And he had never seen a real 'grimoire' before. Even so, there had been quite a few incidents around him that involved magic or grimoires, so in this sense, he had quite a bit of

knowledge.

Tsuchimikado exhaled deeply, and made the four corners of the folded piece of paper with a pen.

“From the beginning, grimoires and magic circles possess similar natures, since the secondary effect of a grimoire originates from the effect of a magic circle.”

Kamijou frowned. He didn’t understand what Tsuchimikado was talking about.

“How is a grimoire similar to a magic circle? Isn’t a grimoire something ancient? And isn’t a magic circle some star painted circle symbol that commonly appears in RPGs?”

After Kamijou asked this, Stiyl looked somewhat frustrated as he narrowed his eyes.

“……You’re using such a stupid analogy again; that’s the Star of David. This isn’t a single product, but a Middle age magic circle that’s used within a circular array.”

He stared at something beside Tsuchimikado’s hand.

“First, we’ll explain from the ‘circle’……the first magic circle was just an ordinary circle. It’s just like that.”

As he said this, he picked up a stone, sat on the ground, and drew a circle with an approximately 50cm diameter on the asphalt road. Though it was hand-drawn, the circle was rather accurate. Kamijou looked surprised, but Tsuchimikado, who continued to draw on the colored paper, didn’t bother to even look. Seemed like a magician who had to create his own magic circle or rune cards had very dexterous hands.

“The pentagram or the hexagram that you novices think about is used to add an additional effect. In order to add on to the basic effect of the circle, we add the seal of King David or the seal of King Solomon.”

Stiyl puffed out a cloud of smoke, and continued to add a pentagram on it. The five tips of the star divided the circle neatly into five different parts, and there was no deviation in any of the straight lines.

But what did this have to do with the grimoires? Kamijou tilted his head, thinking.

Seeing Kamijou like this, Stiyl gently clicked his tongue. Besides his irritated feelings to Kamijou and his own injuries, the reason why Stiyl was all panicky now was that Tsuchimikado was taking too long to plan (or so he thought) a way to break this status quo.

“Then, there’s the last step of setting up a magic circle……it’s too troublesome to explain it a few times, so watch carefully.”

Stiyl shifted the small rock away as he said,

“The last step of setting up a magic circle is to add other things, like words. Most of the time, we write something outside the circle to declare which angel we want to borrow power from.”

While speaking, he continued to write some things along the circumference of the circle. Because it was a scary magic circle, Kamijou thought that he would use an unknown ancient language. But he was just writing English.

Stiyl continued to engrave words on the asphalt floor.

“Just like this case, I’ll have to write down the name of the angel whom I want to borrow the power from. I’ll then have to specify the type of power I want, like ‘fire’ or ‘wind’. I will also have to write down what kind of Telesma I need, and how much power. The quality of the power is important, but what’s more important, and maybe surprisingly, is the quantity. If it’s too little, I definitely won’t be able to activate the spell. But if it is too much, the excess will go out of control, so it’s difficult to find an optimal amount.”

It was only a little while, but there was already a line of words around the circumference. Stiyl’s hand continued to work as he started to write another line of words on the circumference.

“Once I get the correct amount and quality of Telesma, I’ll have to write down how I’m going to use it. Maybe the caster will input this power into his staff and get some special ability, or maybe he will set it up around the magic circle for defence, etc. With that—”

The second line, the third line, the fourth line, the words continued to pile up like a Swiss roll.

Maybe one should call it a magic circle that had markings that were continuously added onto it.

“—Doesn’t it look like the page of a book?”

Stiyl puffed out some smoke at the magic circle.

In reality, it was as Stiyl said. Although the way it was written wasn’t conventional like ordinary books, where there was a specific rule that one had to write horizontally or vertically. But what if one was to read the text along the circle in a horizontal manner? If it just ‘required any type of quality and quantity to mix and match before getting some effect’—wasn’t it like a formula or some sorts?

The formula of a spell.

This was basically what a grimoire was about.

“But there’s still a weakness about using this type of magic circle. The more complicated the picture is, the more difficult it’ll be to control it. Like the word ‘front,’ besides the meaning of facing forward, there’s also the meaning of ‘promenade.’ If there’s a difference in what the caster intended and what is interpreted incorrectly on the magic circle, the spell will go out of control and cause the caster much trouble……but if it’s one’s own misinterpretation, the caster must be pretty talented.”

Stiyl finished speaking, and slowly stood up.

He tossed the small rock in his hand away.

Seeing this, Tsuchimikado spoke up,

“In the end, the amount of information given for this magic circle has a direct relation with its power. The complicated look and the lines added are just details that are added onto it. The reason why I used four pieces of colored paper for this ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ is to add decorations that signify that I want to collect information from every single direction. With this, how much power does

a grimoire that's entirely stuffed with magical knowledge? —Basically, an Original grimoire is an extra-high density magic circle. Even professional magicians find it tough to handle nya."

Tsuchimikado brought this conclusion. The colored paper in his hand was somewhat wet as he was continuously making some markings on the colored paper with his red pen.

Kamijou remained silent for a while.

"Then what? In preparation of Daihaseisai, Oriana actually prepared an original grimoire to form this automatic interception spell?"

This was something that would make people freeze up.

Once, because of the grimoire that was called The Book of the Law, Kamijou himself had been involved in a battle started by three magic factions. Of course, there were differences in the value and tiers between the grimoires, but no matter how anyone thought, this wasn't normal. To say that the scale was too big, one may say that it was so big that it was almost a waste.

Stiyl disagreed with Kamijou's views.

"……Is this really possible? The alchemist Aureolus Izzard was also a grimoire author. That guy was known as the fastest Cancellarius, and, if he didn't sleep or eat, it'd still take three days for him to write up just one thin book, and probably a month to write a thick one. I don't think she has time to write up an 'original' while she's spending her life running around. Or maybe the enemy had set up an 'original' beforehand……"

"No. It's true that one needs a lot of time to complete a book. But this isn't Oriana's objective."

Tsuchimikado spoke in a relaxed tone.

"To her, she just wants the effect of the grimoire that strengthens her magic circle. She doesn't care about the genre. Doesn't it feel like nobody can read her cursive handwriting nya?"

Tsuchimikado said this with a thoroughly red piece of paper in his hand.

“……You’re implying that she is using **Shorthand**?[7] I still feel that’s impossible……no, alright. Right now, we have to consider all the possibilities no matter what.”

Kamijou lowered his head, as the words of these magicians continued to echo in his mind.

Finally, he raised his head.

“This original, it means that nobody can destroy the grimoire, right? If there’s a need to create originals for every battle, wouldn’t the world be filled with originals?”

“That’s right nya— Necessarius never got this kind of report as well. This is just my guess, Oriana’s Shorthand is definitely not perfect. A true *original* can turn each page into a semi-permanent magic circle. But because Oriana’s one is sloppy, it’ll crumble in a short time.”

Tsuchimikado smoothly replied as he continued to write on the wet piece of paper. Not only the surface was important, the order the markings were added, and the type of markings added were also important.

Tsuchimikado bitterly laughed,

“In the past, there were many magicians who wrote flawed originals, and ended up losing control over them before dying. Oriana may taking advantage of that fact and might be able to freely destroy the Shorthand on her own. That makes it easier for the spellcaster to use. A hybrid spell that involves the original and a magician — in other words……it’s not to pass on the techniques and knowledge to the future generation, but to destroy this original instantly when needed nya.”

Hm — Kamijou folded his arms.

“Right now, I still don’t understand anything about the original or the magic circle.”

“……Explaining this to someone like you is really useless.”

Because he was injured, Stiyl’s face was somewhat green, as his mouth was slightly twisted.

“With the interception, it means that Stiyl is unable to use magic on Oriana?”

“Yes. If we don’t deal with that interception spell, we can’t use any magic spells. That spell should be ‘ready to strike when it senses that I’m about to use magic.’ It won’t differentiate each spell on ‘what purpose it does,’ and besides, it’s useless to add that order.”

Stiyl sounded like he was confessing his own weaknesses, but though one could tell from his tone that he was having some reservations, there was no sign of giving up. It was like he was trying to say that it wouldn’t end like this.

“So how? Stiyl is unable to use magic, right? That ‘All-Around Reality Circle’……right? Wouldn’t it be hard to find out Oriana’s position? Since Tsuchimikado can’t really use magic well.”

“No.”

Tsuchimikado shook his head. That colored paper he was holding, which was drenched in red ink, it was a miracle that it was not torn after all the liquid added on it.

Kamijou and Stiyl stared at him.

“I said this before. This is an automatic interception spell created by the Shorthand, so we just need to settle it. If we are successful, we can use some talismans to prevent her from doing it again. Still, the most important thing is to destroy the ‘original’ that the enemy has, so that Stiyl can safely use his magic nya—”

Kamijou stared at his right hand. The ‘original’ was definitely a grimoire that could not be destroyed by any means, but his Imagine Breaker may have been able to deal with it.

Stiyl puffed out some smoke.

“It’s alright if we destroy the Shorthand, but wouldn’t Oriana use this time to run outside the perimeter where the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ is effective?”

“It’s possible. But don’t you guys think that the enemy wouldn’t use these interception spells if she could escape fast enough? It takes a long time to

prepare that. In this tight schedule, one won't do this to add on to her workload."

Hm, Stiyl folded his arms.

Kamijou frowned, thinking that it'd be fine if this was what she was planning.

"That……that Shorthand that you mentioned just now, where is it?"

"I'm guessing it's set up somewhere."

"Is it possible that Oriana is carrying it with herself?"

"I'm not too confident about it if I'm clear about the conditions required to use this Shorthand. But in order to check out the type of lifeforce that Stiyl has, Oriana set up quite a few traps. She then sent some lifeforce that she got from those traps to the automatic magic circle. To set up something like this from the beginning to the end, one has to do it all in the same system……is there such a possibility nya?"

"Then where did she set up this Shorthand?"

If they didn't know where she ran off to, it was impossible for them to find out where she had set up the interception grimoire.

"We'll be looking into this next nya."

What should we do? Tsuchimikado didn't immediately reply to Kamijou's question.

Tsuchimikado breathed out a small amount of air to adjust his breathing. He then placed the red pen he was swinging about into his pocket, and with both hands, he carefully carried the colored paper that was all sticky and wet now.

He then said,

"Stiyl. It doesn't matter what kind of magic it is, just use it. I'd like to know where the interference came from."

Such cold words.

"After Oriana read Stiyl's lifeforce, she used the Shorthand to hinder our work.

That interception spell should involve some magic power as well, so I set up this '**Divination Circle**' that acts like a litmus paper around you to react to her magic. This is a yet unused magic circle that doesn't have any magic power yet. The 'Divination Circle' will activate in response to magic power from an interception spell. It can also calculate where the spell came from, and the direction and distance."

Tsuchimikado said as he knelt down on the floor, still holding onto the colored paper that was dyed red. He then shifted the paper around like he was wiping a table with a cloth. A red circle with diameter of 2 meters appeared immediately on the ground. When he finished this, he stood up, looking bored.

Like he was reading a manual, Tsuchimikado's voice was emotionless, leading Kamijou to wonder whether Tsuchimikado's brain was alright. He frantically grabbed Tsuchimikado's shoulders,

"But this isn't the way to go, Tsuchimikado! You should know what will happen if the interception spell arrives!? If we do this again, Stiyl will fall again!!"

"Again?"

Tsuchimikado inexplicably frowned.

"Who said that? It can't possibly end once, right? Stiyl can't possibly fall here. At least if we destroy that interception spell, we'll have to activate the 'All-Around Reality Circle' to look for Oriana. Before that, if one 'Divination Circle' isn't enough to find out where the spell is, I can only allow him to retry as many times as it takes."

Kamijou's expression changed.

"……Are you serious?"

In contrast, Tsuchimikado gave a straightforward answer.

"Kami-yan, you seemed to have forgotten, so let me remind you again. Even if Oriana Thomson isn't in front of us, even if there are no swords or bullets flying around, this is still a war that concerns human lives. Countries, or even the world, may be overturned as a consequence, you understand?"

“But……!!”

Kamijou stomped onto the ground.

“I can understand if we’re able to win as a result of Stiyl getting injured. But why can’t we get this clear!? If so, there’s a possibility that it won’t be effective no matter how much damage he takes! Also, even if we find out where the interception spell is, and destroy it, are you going to drag Stiyl around to battle? STOP JOKING WITH ME!! I CAN’T POSSIBLY AGREE TO THIS!!”

Stopping himself there, Kamijou swallowed down his final words at the last second.

……Tsuchimikado, you’re asking Stiyl to use magic because you hate getting hurt in a battle……

“I got it. Let’s do this.”

Stiyl accepted this proposal that nobody would find sensible to agree with.

“But you……!!”

“Kamijou Touma, this is gross, stop acting familiar with me. If this can solve everything, there’s no problem.”

After saying that, he glared at Tsuchimikado.

“Conversely, we have to find out where the spell is no matter what. Also, we have to do this on our own, and we can’t let it develop into a bigger problem, got it?”

Being glared at by Stiyl, Tsuchimikado didn’t look away.

“OK. I promise not to escalate this incident and cause Index to forcibly return. I’ll protect her life while she’s still in Academy City, is this your condition?”

Hearing Tsuchimikado’s words, Kamijou was at a loss of words.

No matter how injured he was, Stiyl was only thinking about a certain girl’s happiness.

Even if that happiness didn’t involve him.

Even if where he had been was now occupied by Kamijou Touma.

He wouldn’t pull back because of that fact.

The magician Stiyl Magnus turned his back at Kamijou and Tsuchimikado, and pulled out a rune card from his torso.

‘Divination Circle’.

Without hesitation, Stiyl stepped into the red circle that Tsuchimikado had drawn on the ground.

“Kamijou Touma……I’m unhappy that you’re here right now.”

The red-haired priest said in a firm voice,

“Why aren’t you beside that child? It’s your fault if that child is unhappy because of this.”

After that, the rune flames exploded, and the interception spell activated.

With a scream, one could hear someone fall onto the ground.

This was how Stiyl Magnus lived his own life.

Chapter 3: Tactics of the Pursuers and Pursued.
Worst_Counter.

Part 1

Fukiyose Seiri was a member of the Daihaseisai organizing committee.

Though the committee members didn't have any of the special privileges that were given to Anti-Skill and Judgment, they were in charge of preparing and refereeing the matches, a job which didn't allow any room for error. To any ordinary person, though Daihaseisai was just a large-scale sports meet, it could allow people to easily evaluate the esper power development program of each school, and thus affect the budget that each school received.

Of course, the committee members had to take part in the matches.

Because of this, they had to arrange their work schedule such that it didn't affect their own matches. It sounded simple, but Academy City itself was one-third the size of Tokyo. The distance to each competitive arena may vary due to the different locations, and sometimes, the distance may be too far. It was impossible to excel at this job if one was unable to plan intricately like those suspense novels, or adapt to the situation immediately when the start and end times of a match were changed slightly. It was a race against time.

(I have to get to the arena where the 'ball tossing contest' is, so it's probably better to use the auto-bus than the subway train if……no no, this won't work. There's still a long-distance race on that road, so the road should be closed. If so, it's better to use the subway……ar never mind, since it's in the same district, it might be faster if I run there!)

Fukiyose was holding a container filled with drinks with both hands as she

continued to do her calculations. As a committee member, it was expected that she had to memorize the map and the schedule in her brain. If she didn't do this, it was impossible for her to adapt to any unexpected situations that occurred.

Right now, she was heading towards the arena where she'd be acting as a referee. She purposely chose to stay away from the shortest route and walk on a long, roundabout route. The reason was simple, the ultimate way to shorten the time was to avoid moving with the crowd.

Because of this, Fukiyose chose to move quickly along the road where she had dragged Kamijou along a while back.

(If I chose to leave from the subway or the bus stop, there would still be quite some distance to the arena. I still have to get past the crowded areas as well. In terms of results, it might be faster to walk along the alleys where there are fewer people walking on……but isn't it scary to be running before I even get to warm up?)

Fukiyose, who was muttering to herself, suddenly stopped in her tracks and frowned.

Several hundred meters away, Fukiyose saw a silver-haired girl in cheerleader attire prostrating on the floor. Wouldn't it be extremely hot for her hands to touch the asphalt on such a hot day? Fukiyose thought. There was a botanical test center nearby, so wasn't it better for her to rest under the trees, where it was cool and shady?

"Uuuu……uuuuuuuu……I finally changed my clothes, and so I want to show them off to Touma, but he ran off to some place without waiting for others……"

"Sister……Sister-chan, please don't despair. I guess maybe Kamijou might have some difficulties that he's not willing to talk about?"

Beside the lifeless cheerleader girl was a more petite looking girl with a sympathetic look. She was Fukiyose's class teacher, Tsukuyomi Komoe, and like the foreign girl, she was wearing a brightly colored-cheerleading uniform.

Fukiyose frowned.

"How's that issue that I talked to sensei about? What are you doing in public? If

it’s a slight mental disorder, does she need to fill her stomach with some warm milk or some other hot beverage? How about I use some stimulant to divert her attention, like some chilli powder? I have some chilli powder with me now, do you need it? Take it!”

“No……there’s no need, Fukiyose-san—really! Everything’s fine! You don’t have to stuff Sister-chan’s nose with chilli powder! It feels like some strange punishment that’s done to women during the Edo period!”

“Is that so?”

Fukiyose tucked the small gourd of multi-flavored pepper back into her pocket.

Komoe-sensei was so terrified that her face was all green. However, the cheerleader girl prostrating on the floor was so depressed that she didn’t notice anything that was happening around her. Her butt was sticking out, and what was inside her skirt looks like it was about to be revealed. However, nothing was exposed.

She said,

“Tou…Touma? Where on earth did Touma go to?”

About this… Fukiyose tilted her head as she thought.

What is that boy doing right now?

Part 2

Stiyl Magnus was lying motionlessly on the ground.

The autumn wind was slowly flowing through the depot, as it blew through Stiyl’s black coat. However, he was lying motionlessly on the ground. He was

still breathing, but things didn’t look good right now.

Tsuchimikado Motoharu said,

“Response……ah, got it. There’s a response from the ‘Divination Circle’. Here……according to such a change……it’s from the north-west direction?”

Tsuchimikado didn’t even bother to look at his comrade who was lying on the ground right in front of him. He just continued to stare at the red magic circle around Stiyl that was 2 meter in diameter.

“From the response, the location of the Shorthand is……from this color intensity, 302 meters from here. To think that it’s set up nearby, and the response didn’t move at all. Just as I guessed, it’s a stationary type that requires some set up nya. If so, Oriana can’t possibly be too far away. Instead of running around, it’ll be easier for her to mix into the crowd by walking slowly. Oi, Kami-yan, did you bring a map nya? I’d like to know what’s 302 meters away from here.”

“Tsu…chimikado……”

Kamijou was standing around, stunned, and shuddering slightly, but Tsuchimikado didn’t seem to notice it. When he realized that Kamijou didn’t reply back, he repeated himself without looking at Kamijou.

“Kami-yan, the map, map. Either that or the Daihaseisai tour guide booklet will be good. Oh yeah, there’s the GPS map on the handphone. I’ll look for it myself.”

“TSUCHIMIKADO—!!”

When Tsuchimikado recovered, Kamijou suddenly grabbed the front of his sports shirt. The gold ornament hanging on Tsuchimikado’s neck snapped, creating a loud sound. Kamijou, who was overly enraged, really wanted to destroy the magic circle on the ground with his right hand, before considering that he forgot about Stiyl, who was neglected and was lying on the floor, thus preventing him from doing so.

Tsuchimikado, who was being grabbed by the front of his shirt, calmly stared at Kamijou’s face.

“Kami-yan, you don’t have to worry about Stiyl. That guy is a professional magician as well; he should have enough endurance to take these magical attacks. Besides, the spells that Oriana set up are mainly to ‘obstruct’, and not to ‘attack’.”

He casually said to Kamijou, who was extremely enraged.

“This kind of counterspell is basically about ‘refining and modifying Stiyl’s magic’. Magic is created by lifeforce, if it continues to modify, it’ll cause changes in the human body like an engine being burnt, that’s all there is to it. Kami-yan, this just looks like heatstroke, there’s no need to make a fuss about it.”

“Stop speaking to me like this! Don’t you know who’s the one who purposely got injured because of you!? Why must you be so cold!!”

Just when Kamijou decided to add more strength and pull Tsuchimikado closer to him,

(Cracking sound)

Tsuchimikado’s temple was cracking slightly.

As blood emerged, his flanks that were covered by the PE attire began to turn red from the inside. The redness began to spill over, forming a wound that looked like he was stabbed with a blade-like thing.

“Tsu…chimikado……”

Kamijou frantically let go of his hand which was holding onto Tsuchimikado’s shirt. However, Tsuchimikado’s expression didn’t change.

“This ‘Divination Circle’ is a spell that can react to the magic used by the enemy and give information like the distance and direction. It’s impossible for such a convenient thing to be activated without using magic, right, Kami-yan……”

Kamijou gasped.

That was right. If it was just drawing a magic circle and using spells without any magic power, even Index could do that. To someone like her who didn’t have

any magic power, this was a skill that was suitable for her. But Kamijou had never seen Index use anything like this before, and neither had he seen her cheerfully explain this type of magic circle called the ‘Divination Circle’.

Tsuchimikado appeared to have some disruption in his breathing, but he continued,

“Compared to……the seeking magic that Stiyl uses, my magic isn’t as impressive……just like this, I’ve made a mockery of myself.”

He pressed against his flank that was already drenched in blood with one hand, and said,

“Listen carefully, Kami-yan. Like you said, it’s my fault that Stiyl fell. If I were able to use better magic, this wouldn’t have happened. I have to admit this. So it’s alright no matter how much you hate me.”

His legs continued to exert force onto the ground, supporting that body of his that was going to fall any second.

“But, I succeeded. I’ll find that counterspell which Oriana set up, and destroy it. Also, with this hand of mine, I’ll prevent this deal of the ‘Stab sword’ from taking place. With this, our debts are even. The remaining interest, when everything’s over……I’ll return it with interest back to Stiyl.”

He couldn’t possibly not care about Stiyl’s injuries.

Because he was aware about this, Tsuchimikado chose to keep a cold attitude about it in order to repay his fallen comrade. The faster they could end the battle, the lesser Stiyl’s burdens would be.

Facing Kamijou, who was stunned in front of him, Tsuchimikado smiled.

He seemed to be saying: The fact that I hurt Stiyl hasn’t changed, so please don’t change your attitude so fast.

“Kami-yan, the map. I’d like to know what’s at 302 meters away from here in the north-west direction. The Shorthand interception spell that Oriana set up is definitely there.”

“Ah……Orh……”

As the Daihaseisai tour guide booklet was extremely thick, it was impossible to put it inside the pocket of a sports attire. Kamijou used the GPS function of his phone to found the place that Tsuchimikado specified.

In the end.

He began to doubt his eyes.

“This……Tsuchimikado, is it really in the north-west direction? Distance is 302 meters, right?”

“More accurately, with 0 degrees in the north direction, the angle is 318 degrees from here, so it’s the north-west direction alright. It’s an approximate distance given, but generally, there’s nothing wrong.”

“……That bastard.”

Kamijou showed the designated location to Tsuchimikado.

Tsuchimikado’s face was frozen in shock.

Kamijou thought, it wasn’t weird for him to have this kind of reaction.

Because the location given was in the middle of a certain junior high school.

The flying ship that was slowly flying in the autumn sky was airing the introductions for the next match. There were only ten minutes before the match started within the school.

Part 3

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado couldn’t do anything for Stiyl, who was lying on the

ground. If possible, they didn't want to leak this out before everything gets chaotic. Tsuchimikado was again beside Stiyl, setting up the colored paper and the magic circle of the 'All-Around Reality Circle' that was used to seek out Oriana. Tsuchimikado mentioned that at the same time they broke the interception spell, he'd contact Stiyl through the phone to activate the 'All-Around Reality Circle'.

Stiyl, who was lying on the ground, nodded his head slightly. Just this expression alone was enough to tell others that 'he was still alive'. Kamijou finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Tsuchimikado seemed to have expected that he would get injured, as he pulled out some bandages from the pockets of his sportswear, and cleanly stopped the bleeding on his flank. However, it was impossible to hide the blood stain on the clothes, and it'd cause a ruckus if he walked out like this.

"I'll think about how to deal with my clothes, you better hurry up," Tsuchimikado said. Besides, there was nothing the two of them could do just standing around there, so Kamijou first ran out towards the problematic school.

That was why, right now, Kamijou was running on the boardwalk in this clear autumn day at full speed. People were staring at him, from an old man holding the hand of a child, to the people carrying the tour guidebooks in their hands.

However, he didn't have time to look back at them. Passing by the windmills, of which the rotor blades were spinning slowly, Kamijou picked up the pace as he held the cell phone in his hand.

It was Tsuchimikado who was calling.

"To be able to seal off Stiyl's magic, and be able to set up a clever spell to counter an individual seeking spell, that Oriana should have a certain grasp on our side nya. To set up this spell at the arena where everything's visible, she's such an annoying person."

"But, even if it's before the competition, can she really do this in the middle of school? Did that Oriana use some spell that can turn her invisible?"

"If she could really do that, it'd have shown up during our initial attempt. Oh yeah, Kami-yan. How much time till the next match?"

“7 minutes. It should be shown on that electronic bulletin near you guys.”

Kamijou stared at the gigantic display on the wall of the department store as he continued to run down the straight path.

“If so, the preparations for the match should be over. The spectators and the camera crew should be inside as well, right? Seems like it’d be very difficult to sneak into the school and take care of Oriana’s Shorthand.”

The time taken for a match would depend on the activities done. Normally, it’d last thirty minutes, but sometimes, it might take around an hour.

Considering that the range of the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ was only 3 kilometers, if they were to wait till the match was over, even if Oriana was to walk away slowly, she’d escape.

“Then what should we do? We can’t just leave the counterspell in the school.”

“Of course, Kami-yan. What’s the match in that school?”

“What? Lemme see—”

Turning around the corner, Kamijou started to look around for an electronic bulletin. A circular security robot was moving forward slowly, and was using audio speakers to report about the nearby arenas and the latest news. As he listened, Kamijou said,

“—Seems like……a ‘ball tossing contest’. That’s a school based contest, and seems like all the students are taking part in it.”

“I see. Ah, I just saw the introductions on the flying ship as well. Although I have no idea what the Shorthand looks like, it’s definitely there. If so, there’s only one way, Kami-yan……take part in that match as a player.”

Upon hearing this, Kamijou tripped and nearly fell to the ground.

“Are you serious?”

“In this situation, it's the only way to get into school without looking suspicious nya. In an inter-school match, there should be a three digit number of people

there, so there should be no problem sneaking in one or two people.”

“But we are high school students, it’s improbable that we could blend in with a group of junior high students, right? Do you have any countermeasure for this?”

“Kami-yan, it’s the sense of youth. Once you give off this young sense of youth, you won’t be suspected.”

From the looks of it, wasn’t it improbable? Kamijou couldn’t help but sigh dejectedly. There were television cameras broadcasting during the match, and one slight mistake would really embarrass him on television.

At this moment, Tsuchimikado spoke in a tone that was softer than normal.

“No, Kami-yan. We can’t stop here. Besides searching for Oriana, there’s a much worse reason.”

“Eh?”

Kamijou continued to run as he listened to the phone.

“That counterspell may not be just used to target Stiyl’s magic. Once the conditions are met, ordinary people other than us will be endangered.”

“……What did you say?”

Maybe because the arena was nearby, there were a lot more people around him. If it was an actual competition, they’d have finished the admission formalities 10 minutes ago. But this was just a ‘sports meet’, and because the admission conditions were a lot more relaxed, there were many more security guards around.

“Listen carefully, Kami-yan, listen calmly and carefully. What Oriana’s counterspell does is that it ‘reads the preparations to cast the magic, identify the lifeforce of a caster, and prevent the caster from using it.’ Up till now, do you understand?”

“Un, I do.”

Actually, Kamijou didn’t really understand.

Basically, what he knew was that the Shorthand that Oriana had set up could identify Stiyl through some means, and prevent him from using magic.

“But so what?”

“Which means nya……here’s the problem. ‘The preparations to cast the magic,’ do you know what that means?”

“……Ah? About that, I guess……it’s just mumbling about some strange chants, and drawing some magic circles that no one can understand?”

Even if Kamijou was asked about the process of preparation, as he couldn’t fully grasp ‘what kind of thing magic was,’ he couldn’t answer this clearly.

Tsuchimikado’s tone became even more bitter.

“However, it’s still okay if it’s just like this……Kami-yan. For example, there’s some spell called a……‘spiritual talk’. It’s a spell which uses the significance of speech to determine its power. If it’s this kind of magic preparation, wouldn’t making a sound be enough to activate it?”

Kamijou was terrified.

But, as he was about to reach the problematic middle school, he didn’t stop.

“This is just a complete guess of mine, but if it can really react to this, we have a rather troublesome problem on our hands. Once Oriana is to speak near that Shorthand, she’ll be able to input additional commands into the counterspell, and the other party will fall like Stiyl……if it’s just making a sound, do you think there are any differences between a magician and an ordinary person? It’s dangerous to these ordinary students as well, you know.”

“But is that possible? While Stiyl was down, we were still talking like usual.”

Kamijou rushed past the spectators heading towards the arena, and reached the entrance of the school.

As they had paid the entrance fee when they first arrived in Academy City, there was no need for them to have an entrance pass to enter the arena.

“You’re right nya. There’s an order for the spiritual talk, and there’s a limit to the number of words to be used, like a ballad and a haiku. So just making a sound shouldn’t garner a response……if so, do you know what’s the easiest magic ritual in the world??”

“Eh???”

At the main entrance of the arena, or the school, there were groups crowding the entrances, trying to get in. Kamijou thought, I have to somehow cleverly get past them.

“It’s ‘touch’. The significance of ‘touching with a hand’ is especially large. In many religions, the values of the left hand and the right hand are different, because the left hand and the right hand have their own uses. In the New Testament, the Son of God, who’s especially prominent, is able to heal the sick or revive the dead just by touching them with his right hand. What if Oriana’s Shorthand can react to that?”

“Wait……wait a sec.”

Kamijou stopped.

Tsuchimikado continued,

“We would say that if it was a real magician, just ‘touching’ alone isn’t going to cause anything to happen. ‘Touching’ is a magical action that several religious sects will use, and not just Christianity. Just like this, the ‘analytical conditions’ that uses the caster’s lifeforce may be a little ambiguous. If it’s a professional magician who has some form of defense, they can still reflect the invading attack of the Shorthand—but,”

He paused.

“To any novice who completely doesn’t have any defense, even if there’s a degree of ambiguity, it’ll still be forced to analyze the lifeforce and carry out the attack. Also, without the defense of a magician, the symptoms will be much worse than Stiyl. Like how someone with severe heatstroke can die, they’ll end up endangering their own lives.”

“But……but the spell used to attack Stiyl is a spell that prevents magic, right?

Will that react to any non-magicians or espers?”

Running off after he stopped, Kamijou’s movements were slower than before. This was to prevent his legs from tripping due to nervousness.

“Strictly speaking, the target for any response is the ‘lifeforce’ of anyone who is preparing to use magic, so even ordinary people are in danger. This isn’t related to whether it can seal up magic, and it’s likely that it doesn’t matter whether the person has any knowledge of magic. Didn’t the searching spell ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ that Stiyl used receive what I drew?”

Kamijou thought, this was the worst case scenario.

From the front of the entrance, one could see the school with a soil ground.

In that school, it seemed that something like a land mine was buried somewhere. As they didn’t know that there was a land mine buried there, many unsuspecting people were heading to the arena where a match was about to occur. This ball tossing match wasn’t going have a fixed route like a 100 meters race, but rather, they were going to use the entire place. Thus, the chance of getting the jackpot was rather large.

“Anyway, Kami-yan, we have to settle this before sacrifices are made. It’ll be bad if there’re signs of magic in front of the camera — either way, I don’t want to hurt any ordinary people.”

The conversation ended.

Kamijou placed the phone into his pocket and left the main entrance. He wouldn’t make it in time if he was going to queue up. He walked along the wired fence that separated him from the school. The fence was about two meters tall, and if he tried to climb over it, the unmanned reconnaissance helicopter in the sky would begin to take action. Once this trouble was stirred up, combat helicopters may fly over from other places.

He walked around the school, and reached the back of the school compound, finding the backdoor to the school in the process.

There were Anti-Skill members at the back. It’d be alright if he had the PE attire and ID of this middle school, but if he was going in like this, he was going to be

stopped even if he was just an ordinary resident of Academy City.

(Now what……)

Kamijou leaned on the fruit juice vending machine as he thought. There were five minutes before the match started, and there was no time to look for any other entrances.

Suddenly, there were some movements near the backdoor. A female student was carrying an ice tub that was filled with sports drinks into the compound. There was a thin jacket over her short-sleeved PE shirt, and below her shirt, one could see her butt covered with shorts.

It was the committee member, Fukiyose Seiri.

“No way!?”

From the front of the vending machine, Kamijou frantically moved to the side in order to conceal himself.

“……?”

Fukiyose, who was carrying the ice tub, suddenly turned around and stared in this direction. She then tilted her head and vanished into the school compound.

I guess I wasn’t spotted……Kamijou thought. If she found out, she’d be angrily yelling, “WHY DIDN’T YOU GO CHEER FOR OUR SCHOOLMATES!? WHY ARE YOU SLACKING OFF HERE!? KAMIJOU TOUMA!! IF YOUR BRAIN ISN’T DEVELOPED ENOUGH, GO GET SOME DHA!! GO EAT SOME TUNA FISH EYEBALLS!!”

“Oh……oh no……that Tsuchimikado wants me to sneak into the competitive arena, but if Fukiyose is to act as the referee, she’ll find out immediately…… bastard, is this plan impossible from the beginning?”

“……What’s impossible nya?”

Hearing the low tone of a man behind him, Kamijou jumped in shivers.

“I’ve already caught up with you yo!?”

Kamijou frantically turned around, and in front of him was Tsuchimikado, now in a brand new PE attire. The wound seemed to be completely healed now, and there was no sign of injuries anywhere.

“You……do you still intend to go in from the back door?”

“Yeah. At least it’s easier to go in from here than the front door.”

Tsuchimikado said casually. Kamijou looked at the back door again. There were three fully armed Anti-Skill members, and there were unmanned reconnaissance helicopters in the sky. How on earth were they going to sneak in?

Seeing Kamijou’s thinking and surprised look, Tsuchimikado smiled,

“It’s simple. Look there, Kami-yan, there’s a puddle of water. There’s no rain recently, so it seems like the committee members just sprayed some water around.”

“Hm. Then……what next?”

“Like this!”

After he finished speaking, Tsuchimikado suddenly tripped Kamijou.

“Wa!?”

As Kamijou shouted, his body rolled into the puddle.

Tsuchimikado laughed, “To think that we can have a mud battle at this age nya!!” as he did a flying swoop at Kamijou.

Pa thong! With a sound that's never heard in a cartoon movie, Kamijou’s body sunk even lower. The Anti-Skill members at the backdoor were staring at them suspiciously.

“Eh……WAAAHHHHH……! You……what are you doing all of a sudden……!?”

Kamijou was being pressed down by Tsuchimikado’s mass. To Kamijou, Tsuchimikado, who donned a pair of blue sunglasses, softly said,

“(……Kami-yan, are your clothes fully stained with mud? We have to mess it up such that they can’t tell which school we belong to from the design.)”

What?

Just as Kamijou was about to raise his doubts, Tsuchimikado, who was drenched in mud, stood up. He extended his hand towards Kamijou, or should I say, he grabbed Kamijou’s arm as if he was going to pull Kamijou up forcefully, and said to the male Anti-Skill member nearby, who was on his guard,

“Wa, I’m sorry! How are we going to take part in the match! Must we take part in the match like this? There are still cameramen around to interview us, you know!”

Hearing this request, the Anti-Skill member seemed to be shocked.

He stared at Kamijou and Tsuchimikado’s clothes, which were stained with mud all around, from the top to the bottom. It was impossible to tell which school they belonged to, as the original characteristics of the uniforms were completely covered in mud.

“Wha……what? I have to really hand it to you. Did you guys prepare any extra clothes?”

“Ah, yes. However, it’s in our clubroom.”

“Then why don’t you hurry up and get there? There’s only four minutes to the match. Ah sorry, let us check your IDs, proper procedures, you know. It’ll be over soon.”

Kamijou was inadvertently shocked.

The Anti-Skill member pulled out a round cylinder that was like a ball-point pen. By pressing the button on top of the cylinder, a transparent sheet would extend out from the side of the cylinder like a scroll being unraveled. It was around 15cm long, and by placing the palm on it, one could read the fingerprints, veins, electric signals to read the state of the body, etc. It was an easy ID identifier in Academy City.

(……Wait……oi, Tsuchimikado, how are we going to get past this……!?)

Kamijou was so tense that he was about to shout it out, but Tsuchimikado merely extended out that palm of his that was covered in mud.

“Alright, stick onto it right……eh!? Seems like there’s some wrong signals here!!”

“What! You didn’t wipe your hand clean before pressing on it!!”

The Anti-Skill member frantically operated the identifier, but there was no response from the part that had absorbed mud. He turned to look at his colleagues, but they both shook their heads. Seemed like he was the only one who had brought the identifier.

“Damn it, now we have to send someone to get another one from the front gate.”

“There’s no time! Don’t we have to go to the clubroom to change and get into the arena ya!?”

Hearing Tsuchimikado’s frantic tone, the Anti-Skill member again turned towards his colleagues. Of the remaining two, one of them beckoned them to move on, while the other one waved a hand in front of the face, signaling that they shouldn’t.

After considering about it for a while, the Anti-Skill member nodded. With a 2 vs 1 decision, Anti-Skill allowed them to move in.

“If you want to get in, hurry up! You’re not allowed to take part in the match if you don’t get there on time!”

“Thank you—”

Tsuchimikado pulled Kamijou’s hand and walked through the back door in an upright manner. Kamijou felt that this couldn’t be helped, but he didn’t forget to get to the main point,

“Oi, Tsuchimikado! Where’s our spare clothes!? Isn’t it hard to ‘mix’ in with all the mud on us?”

“What are you saying, they have those in the health room! In order to save the injured, that place should be opened today nya! Hurry up and change, we’ll

sneak in after that!!”

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado continued to converse among each other as they dashed into the school with a dirt ground, towards the cement covered campus.

There were three minutes before the match began.

Part 4

The next match would be a ‘ball tossing contest’.

Misaka Mikoto was standing on the school compound with soil ground.

To her, who was used to the new facilities of Tokiwadai middle school, it was refreshing to be in this arena where the ground was uneven, which caused a difference in shock absorbance. With a little wind, dust would fly up. Could anyone really carry out precise tests in this place that was like those places depicted in Western movies? Or were they really setting this irregular terrain as a practical training ground?

There were only around 200 students on the Tokiwadai Middle School side, and they were all ojous, so they looked elegant, charming and petite. The reason why there was so much spotlight from the spectators was, well besides their prowess, these girls on lens were like a beautiful painting.

However, that was an ‘external’ viewpoint from outside Academy City.

The views from those ‘inside’ Academy City were completely different.

When the ojous of Tokiwadai took part in a battle, it meant that their weakest, Level 3s, all the way to their strongest, Level 5s, would be taking part. Even if the numbers and physique were different, the opponent was simply pessimistic against this group of ojous who could sink an Aegis-class warship with smiles

on their faces.

In actuality, on the other side of the school compound……behind the pole baskets used for the tossing contest that was separating them, was the opposing school. Though there were more than 2000 of them, one could see from afar that there was a sense of realization over there, which was covered by an atmosphere of tragedy. In the eyes of the Tokiwadai camp, these people were giving off a sense of failure. The proud ojous quickly realized this as they gave a sharp Ohohohohoho laugh.

But Misaka Mikoto was not pleased with this situation at all.

Her two hands on her hips, Biri Biri, she began to emit some blue and white sparks.

(……WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON!)

In the enemy's camp, 100 meters away, among the 2,000+ middle school students, was a person who shouldn't have been there. And to think that guy even carefully prepared by putting on the school's designated PE attire.

She had never beaten that guy before.

The only teenager she had ever showed her crying face to.

(WHAT–ON–EARTH–ARE–YOU–DOING–OVER THERE!! OI……!?)

The kouhais around Mikoto were somewhat afraid to ask her what was wrong, but Mikoto, who lowered her head as she gave an eerie laugh, didn't realize that the air around her was crackling.

After the participants were in the arena, Kamijou Touma, who heard the name of the opponent from his own camp, went green immediately.

"(Eh……!? The opponent is Tokiwadai Middle School! Fa…face it, Tsuchimikado! If the ojous over there are angry, they'll probably send out a railgun that can even cut Tokyo Tower in half!)"

"(……Nya. I heard that with their abilities and Levels combined, they can even take down the White House with just flesh. Kami-yan, we should be careful

about stray bullets.)”

After talking about things that would guarantee that they’d be attacked by the ojous if the ojous had heard them, the two started to talk about emergency battle plans.

“Shorthand is just a code name. in fact, it’s impossible to set up such a thick book down there nya. The Divination Circle’s response points to this school; do you see anything that’s strange on first glance?”

Like what Tsuchimikado said, there was no ‘magical item’ to be seen at this school.

On the soil ground, the ten metal pole baskets were arranged in a line. Placed around them were red and white balls. As there were more than 2,000 people taking part in this, not only was the basket big, there were a lot of balls to be used.

If she was to set it up, where would she put it?

“Really, it’ll be good if it’s shaped like an old book.”

“That’s the objective of the enemy. Though we don’t know Oriana’s modus operandi, since it’s a set-up type, there must be a spell that’s set up. It can be disguised as graffiti, scratches, dyes or even stains. Does she think that I can’t find it? Kami-yan, the Onmyoji techniques that I learned include Fengshui techniques of scenery and buildings. ‘Reading’ these magic marks is my specialty.”

Tsuchimikado smiled as he answered.

Kamijou started to think.

“Oh yeah, Tsuchimikado. Speaking about where Oriana’s Shorthand is, isn’t that a grimoire as well……also, it’s still an Original, right? I heard that people’s hearts will be broken if they read it, so won’t the people taking part in this ball tossing match all fall?”

“No, I don’t think so. The Shorthand is a grimoire that doesn’t allow any reader to understand it. Since it’s a scribbled book that cannot be read, no corrupted

knowledge will be passed on. So you don’t have to worry about that.”

I see. Kamijou finally relaxed.

However, Tsuchimikado’s face still looked stern.

“The important thing is how that Oriana set up the grimoire nya. If it’s carved on a stone tablet, the stone tablet itself will become a grimoire. Though I don’t know how far it extends to, I hope that she didn’t set up something too big, because the chances of touching it would be extremely big.”

Kamijou looked past the students’ heads, at the school. What he saw was a row of ten pole baskets that were used for this match, with some red and white balls scattered around it.

“It’s alright if it’s those baskets……for example, it’ll be disastrous if one of those balls is the grimoire. There’re a total of around 2,500 people after totaling both sides, right? If so, the number of balls prepared will be twice the number. More importantly, the chances of touching it are high.”

Not only would finding it be difficult, the participants would also be tossing the ball. Even if it was set up among them, they didn’t know where to start looking from.

“No, the balls were only added just now. When Stiyl was attacked by the counterspell, these balls were still in the warehouse. If so, it’ll be weird if the ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ didn’t point towards the warehouse.”

“So now what?”

Kamijou turned around to stare at Tsuchimikado, before looking back at the school campus, and then back at Tsuchimikado.

“The baskets are rather suspicious nya. It seems like they have been set there for quite some time. They have to decide where the baskets are to be placed because they need to ‘scatter the balls around the basket.’ If so, it’s likely that she set the spell at the basket.”

“But, what do we do……? Though it’s only preparations, this is when the spectators are gathering. Won’t we be noticed if we just casually approach it?”

This was obvious, because there was nothing blocking anyone's view. Or had she disguised herself like how Kamijou thought?

"No. It's likely that Oriana wouldn't get close to the school. Kami-yan, didn't you notice Anti-Skill at the back door? Trying to break through it while running away is a waste of effort… Those baskets may be borrowed from some other place nya. Maybe she set up the magic circle while they shifted them here."

"But, just touching it alone will create a victim. Then how did the courier not fall?"

"It's likely that Oriana set up when it'll start and stop. The proceedings of the match will be televised through broadcast. By looking at the electronic bulletin, one could get hold of the situation that's required for her to prepare this nya."

"Stop……?"

Kamijou raised a doubt, but Tsuchimikado smiled,

"Oriana will try her best to avoid any chaos in order to allow the deal to proceed smoothly. It's likely that she'll stop it when the match is over and the committee finishes clearing up. Of course, she'll be far away by then."

But once anyone touched that Shorthand grimoire, whose shape and whereabouts were unknown, it'd be disastrous.

"That Oriana……thought about these right from the start?"

"I don't know nya. It's likely that she didn't think that far. Besides, there's a competition schedule on the tour guidebook. Investigating the actions of the committee members isn't impossible."

As Tsuchimikado answered, the audio broadcast of the school could be heard.

"Everyone, get into position."

A voice could be heard.

The fight against this enemy that wasn't there was about to start.

On one side of the school compound, inside the tent for committee members, Fukiyose Seiri was holding a microphone.

“Everyone, get into position.”

The voice released by her throat overlapped with the noise from the audio speakers. The work of a committee member was rather diverse, ranging from recalling the injured to giving the start and stop signals for a match. The actual broadcast was left to the broadcasting crew inside the broadcasting tent, so the committee members just needed to give the starting signal.

There was other troublesome work like counting the number of balls tossed into the baskets. Because there were so many participants, the number of balls tossed into the baskets could not be underestimated. In this ‘ball tossing contest’, 1/3 of the estimated time taken was used for counting the balls.

“Get set.”

Fukiyose was only in charge of giving the starting command, whereas the other commands were to be handled by the other committee members. After this was done, she had to count the balls afterwards. Others may feel that it was bothersome, but she had other things on her mind.

(I’ve been feeling that someone’s inside that group……is it fatigue? Do I lack vitamins? I recall that soybeans can relieve mental fatigue. But didn’t that shopping program mention that soy isoflavones is effective against anything ranging from obesity and blood toxins to memory loss and aging of skin?)

While her doubts weren’t solved yet, Fukiyose raised her voice,

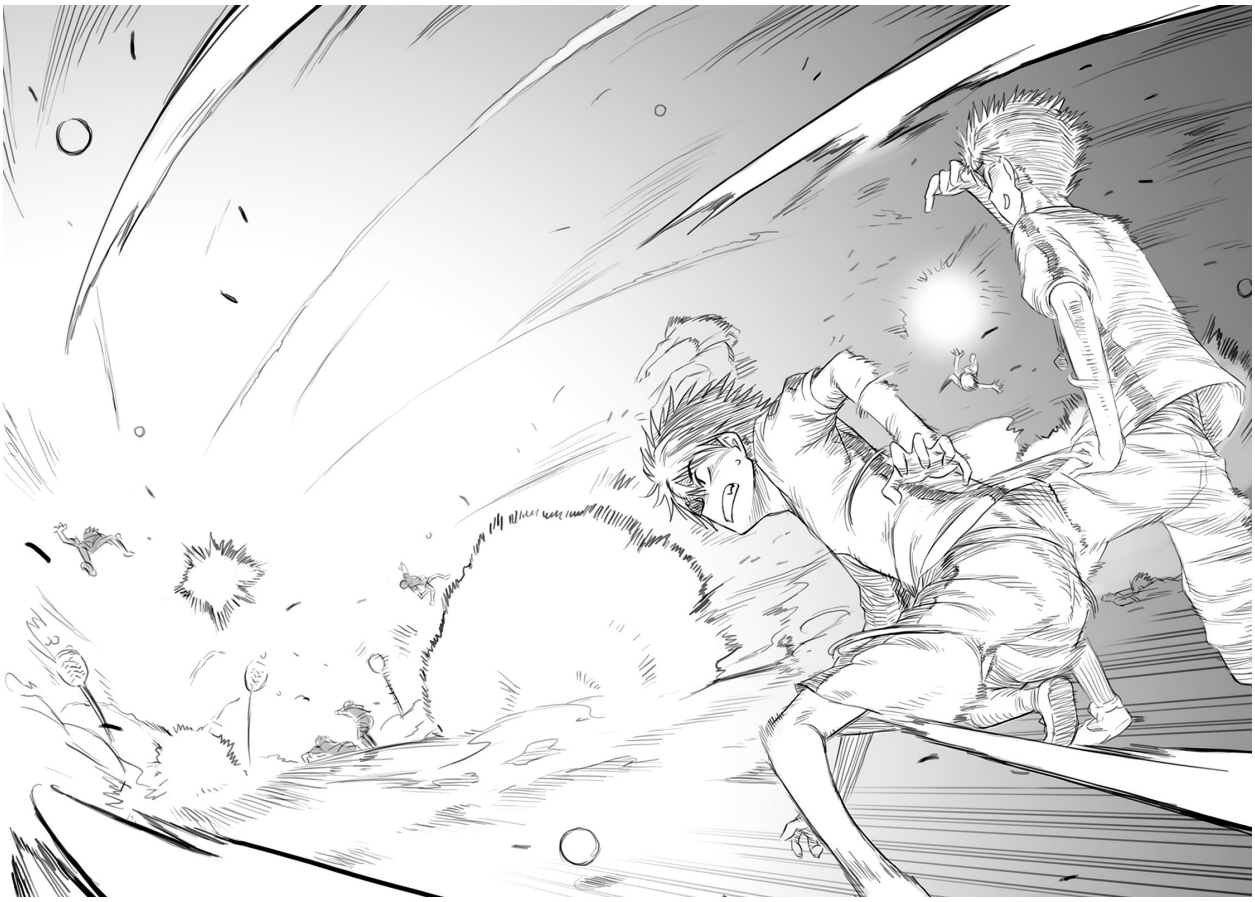
“START!!”

Beep!! With the sound of the whistle, the ‘Ball Tossing match’ started. The loudspeakers in the school started blaring a march that was normally heard during a sports meet.

The students from both schools ignored the fast paced and entertaining music as they advanced to the middle from the left and right side of the arena. Their targets were the pole baskets that were approximately 3 meters tall.

“Woah! Kami-yan, get down!!”

Tsuchimikado shouted. Just as Kamijou got down onto the ground, colorful lights and flashes of red, blue and yellow flew over from the Tokiwadai Middle School side that was several meters behind the baskets. The flashes arrived, creating shockwaves. With this volley of attacks, dozens of boys were blown away.



“Wah, to think that those guys were knocked back by 10 meters!?”

A part of the crowd vanished. During the Wrench Pole match that Kamijou had been involved in, there had also been esper attacks, but these were of a completely different level. A crater several meters in diameter, one that was comparable to the craters on the moon, was made. Even the dust floating in the air was blown away by the impact.

Kamijou was terrified, and turned to look behind. Though the students that had been blown away were still wobbly in their legs, it seemed like nobody was hurt.

Seemed like as the explosion occurred, other espers from Tokiwadai had added some protective abilities like **Air Bag** or **Shock Absorber**. As expected of the ojous that liked to take care of the enemy's welfare.

However, Kamijou's right hand, which contained the Imagine Breaker power, may end up destroying this kind protective power. The wound on Tsuchimikado's flank may open once there was an impact.

"……"

"……"

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado inadvertently communicated with each other wordlessly.

Next, flashes of red, blue and yellow were heading towards the two of them. Fireballs, electric guns and vacuum bullets were flying towards them.

"Wha……what is going on……! Didn't the schedule say that it's a Ball Tossing contest?"

"Instead of balls, we might as well call them cannons nya!!"

Because of these cannon blasts, parts of this group of student began to vanish one by one. Kamijou and Tsuchimikado got into the crowd, making their way to the middle of the school compound with all their might, to the baskets that were arranged in a row. The posts weren't supported by humans, but by metal bases on the ground.

"…(Listen carefully, Kami-yan. I'm going to check the posts in order.)"

"…(Ah, is there anything I can help with?)"

"…(I'll tell you if there's anything to be done. Okay, stay here nya. You're up next once I find this Shorthand.)"

"…(Got it, however…)"

Kamijou thought, what am I going to do in the meantime? Anyway, in order to avoid suspicion, he threw a white ball that was on the ground, and thinking that

if he, an outsider, was to really take part in this match, it could really change the outcome of the battle, so he was not too enthusiastic about it.

Under a post, Tsuchimikado purposely tossed a ball that would definitely not land inside the basket, and examined it from top to bottom. The pole basket was 3 meters tall, so just twisting his head up to examine it was really tedious.

Besides checking for any flash card that Oriana may be using, Tsuchimikado was checking different areas, whether there were any strange words that were carved on the pole, or whether there were any strange markings on the metal base.

“(…Tsuchimikado?)”

“(…Not this one, Kami-yan.)”

He shook his head, picked up another white ball, and headed towards the next post.

Next, he checked the second one beside it, then the third one, only to be let down. Seeing this, Kamijou felt that time was running out.

There were still seven more to go.

Just when Kamijou was going to follow Tsuchimikado from behind, a white flash was shot from behind him.

“Wa!?”

He immediately used his right hand to block. The light bullet flew over, and upon touching Kamijou’s hand, Shoosh! A sound could be heard as it gently bounced off. Somewhere rather far away from him, he could see the girls of Tokiwadai staring, wide-mouthed, but Kamijou didn’t care. It would be bad if he was noticed. Thus, he nudged his elbow on a trembling male student nearby, pretending that it was this boy who had saved him.

“(…Kami-yan, it’s not the fourth one either. Next one.)”

The angry girls of Tokiwadai Middle school turned to aim at that boy. Tsuchimikado and Kamijou then proceeded on to the fifth one.

The human wall in front begins to shake.

A group of boys who were only focused on tossing the balls into the baskets were blown back like a row of dominoes. They were crowded together as they knocked into the fifth basket.

Dang! With a metallic sound, the basket started to shake.

If Oriana had set the Shorthand at the fifth post—lots of sacrifices would have been made.

Like how Stiyl seemed to be suffering from severe heatstroke.

Those without magical capabilities could die at the hands of this counterattacking spell.

“Damn it!!”

Tsuchimikado frantically dashed towards the group. Kamijou wanted to go after him, only to stop in his tracks.

The fifth pole was shaking heavily.

It fell sideways, crashing heavily into the sixth pole beside it.

The sixth pole was shaking about as well.

In front of the falling metal was a female student from Tokiwadai.

The girl, who was holding a red ball with both hands, was wide-mouthed as she stared at the heavy equipment, which weighed over 30kg, falling onto her.

Kamijou wanted to run over, but the group of boys who fell at the fifth post were blocking him.

“Damn it! Tsuchimikado!!”

Kamijou shouted. He jumped onto the back of Tsuchimikado, who was dashing towards the fifth post, and leapt over the group of boys on the ground. He lost his balance in mid-air, but still managed to grab the collar of the girl’s jogging suit, and used momentum to drag her aside. At least he managed to get out of the

path of the falling pole.

At this moment, from far away, an explosion caused by esper powers colliding occurred.

The sixth pole, which was falling down, was affected by the storm generated. The metal pole was now falling towards Kamijou and company, with numerous times the weight and momentum.

(Damn it, got to get out of the way first!)

In this posture, when he was lying on the ground, Kamijou was unable to jump away. Due to the impact when he fell down, Kamijou's body was hurting all over. He shifted his aching body over, and pushed the girl, now unable to move, away. The girl looked surprised, and it seemed that she didn't even know what was happening around her.

(…Really!!)

Kamijou gritted his teeth.

The pole basket that was over 30kg was falling onto him.

In that instant.

Dang!! Like the sound of a Church bell being rung, the sixth pole basket was forced aside. It was cut in half by an orange beam of light, continued to bounce on the ground, and rolled away for several meters. The surrounding students instantly ducked, but several seconds later, it was back to the chaotic battle mode. During this time, what was left of the pole continued to bounce on the ground.

Railgun.

One of the esper powers, a bullet which moved at three times the speed of sound.

Kamijou Touma shakily looked back. In front of him was a girl who had flicked a coin with her thumb, the Ace of Tokiwadai Middle school who was emitting sparks all over her body, Misaka Mikoto.

The two stared at each other.

“Hehehe…”

Kamijou laughed weakly.

“Really…you…YOU-REALLY-WANT-ME-TO-BE-THE-ONE-PUNISHED!!??”

At the same time, Mikoto continued to fire an electric shot.

“Ww…waaahhhh!! That girl down there, before you get hit by this large-scale attack, run away!! I’ll block this, so hurry up and run!!”

Kamijou frantically waved his right hand to deflect the electric shot.

The girl just shouted from behind, “Thank you very much! I’m sorry!!” bowed politely, and ran away from the battlefront with amazing speed. In a flash, she was lost among the participants who were duking it out.

Kamijou didn’t look behind as he calmly said,

“…Phew, seeing her being so lively, guess nothing’s wrong.”

“You…sneaking into another person’s match is bad enough, why are you acting so cool…?”

While arguing halfway, Mikoto felt somewhat tired as she placed a hand on her forehead. She then extended her small hand out to the side—the seventh pole.

“STOP! Wait a second, Misaka!!”

“Wha…what are you doing?”

Mikoto’s pulled her hand back, suspending it in mid-air.

Kamijou didn’t look at Mikoto’s face. He was observing the seventh pole. At the height where Mikoto was about to place her hand, there seemed to be something.

A rectangular piece of paper…that was as big as a chewing gum wrapper.

Though he couldn’t see it from here, there seemed to be some small words written on it.

(A flashcard!? Don’t tell me that’s the Shorthand?)

Kamijou’s back suddenly froze.

A foreboding struck him, stiffening his body.

(I see…it’s likely that the Shorthand that Tsuchimikado talked about, that thing that creates an interception spell, is referring to that. Don’t tell me every single one of Oriana flashcards is a Shorthand?)

Kamijou thought, this was bad.

Both Kamijou and Mikoto were about 1.5m away from each other.

Though they were near to each other, it was not a distance that could be covered by just stretching a hand out.

The thick piece of paper was only taped onto the pole at the top.

As the autumn wind blew, the piece of paper would sway about slightly.

Misaka Mikoto’s palm was only 3 cm away from the pole.

Once a strong wind blew—the thick piece of paper might touch her.

Thinking about how Stiyl was lying on the ground right now, Kamijou inadvertently gasped.

He carefully selected his choice of words, and calmly, he said to the girl, who was in danger,

“Listen, Misaka. I’ll explain it to you later. Listen to me, get away from there. What I’m going to say will be very important.”

“Ah??? What are you talking about? Saying this all of a sudden?”

As expected, Mikoto frowned. Her hand…continued to remain at that position though. It was neither moving forward, nor backwards, maintaining a distance of

3 cm.

The thick piece of paper suddenly swayed about slightly.

Mikoto didn’t notice the danger hidden in this situation.

“I say. Right now, what authority do you have to order me around? Why are you here? We can’t continue the match when the pole is down, so you better give me a proper explanation—”

At this moment, one could hear the air being cut.

The sound came from behind Kamijou. The male student from the school facing off against Tokiwadai fired a dirt spear at Mikoto. Because of the esper powers, the dirt spear was accelerated and cut through the air like a metal arrow. If one was hit by it, the person’s ribs would break.

Seeing this sudden situation, Mikoto was shocked, and emitted some blue sparks, ready to strike back.

“Stop interfering!!”

Before she could take action, Kamijou’s right hand stretched out to the side.

The boy’s fist, which was between the dirt spear and Mikoto, smashed the dirt spear in one hit.

The dust that was flying about dirtied Kamijou’s face, but he didn’t even bother rubbing it off.

It seemed like he didn’t have time to do this, as his eyes were fixated on Misaka Mikoto.

“Bak…”

Mikoto looked at what was left of the dirt spear, and then turned to look at Kamijou.

“Are you an idiot? Why are you blocking your own allies’ attacks? Eve…even without your help, I can settle this on my own. What’s this important thing that

you want to talk about? Can't you say it after the match? What is it that requires you to sneak in here and say it to me!?"

"I'll explain it to you later, Misaka. Anyway, just hurry up and get out of here!!"

"Really! Why aren't you listening to other people's words! The one who should be leaving is you, right!!"

Mikoto angrily smacked against the pole to vent her frustration.

Frantically, Kamijou inadvertently shouted.

"Wait a second, Misaka! Don't say anything now, and come over now!! It's dangerous there! I don't want you to get hurt!!"

Mikoto stopped what she was doing.

For some reason, her face reddened. Her head didn't move, but her eyes seemed to be looking away from Kamijou.

"There's no need for you to worry about me in this minor competition. No matter who attacks me, I'll be fine as long as I use my powers…"

Kamijou couldn't hear what she was saying, and right now, there was no time for that. His eyes were watching each and every single action that Mikoto did. Sweat flowed onto his face, so he quickly rubbed it away with his right hand, and could feel a gritty feeling as he rubbed it away.

On the other hand, Mikoto, who was being observed by Kamijou, made a sound as she straightened her back. The hand that was about to touch the pole slowly pulled back in front of her. After a while, she violently shook her head.

(Anyway…there's nothing wrong right? However, why is she blushing???)

Kamijou had this doubt in his head, but Mikoto's hand did leave the pole after all.

Just when Kamijou relaxed,

"What the heck, stop saying such things to scare me."

Mikoto bent her back that she had straightened just now, and listlessly grabbed onto the pole with her right hand.

“Damn it!!”

Kamijou dashed forward with all his might. The thick piece of paper was being blown about wildly in the wind, and was about to touch Mikoto’s palm. Before that happened, Kamijou leaped towards her, and using the momentum, ducked. He clung onto Mikoto’s waist with both hands, and sent her to the ground in one go.

“Eh? EH?”

Mikoto lay on the ground and looked up at the body covering her. The two hands in front of her chest froze.

“Wah…wah…wh…whywhywhywhywhy…?”

Like an explosion, Mikoto’s face was fully flushed red, and she was unable to complete her sentence. Kamijou’s face became even more serious.

“Quiet, don’t move.”

After saying this, while Mikoto was still lying on the ground, Kamijou observed her face. Since he didn’t know anything about magic, he was unable to make any judgment. However, just by looking from the view of a layman, her face was extremely red now, like she had some sort of fever.

(He did mention that there would be symptoms like severe heatstroke…)

In order to examine it better, Kamijou brought his face closer.

“Eh…that…?”

Mikoto blinked. To her, it seemed like Kamijou, who had brought his face closer, realized something, and slowly closed her eyes.

Seeing this situation, Kamijou sucked his tongue, and frantically placed his right hand on her forehead.

“Damn it, are you really unwell, Misaka!!? A rise in temperature…damn it, why is your face that red!!?”

Hearing Kamijou shout, Mikoto snapped back into reality, and frantically retorted back violently,

“Wha…what! Since when was it red since when was it red since when was it red! I’m not having a fever!!”

Eh? Kamijou pulled his face backwards. If any ordinary person was supposed to have worse symptoms than Stiyl, then it meant that Mikoto had never touched the pole basket.

However, they had found where Oriana had set up her flashcard — the location of the counterspell.

Kamijou got away from Mikoto, and looked around.

“Tsuchimikado, it’s here! The seventh one—!!”

Just as he was about to shout this out, he stopped.

He saw it.

The thick piece of paper that was stuck on the seventh pole with tape had the words ‘property of Nogi Middle school’. Was this pole borrowed from other schools?

Tsuchimikado said.

This is a tag to prevent them from losing it.

(It’s not this!? Then, where’s the real Shorthand!?)

Kamijou frantically looked around.

At this moment, the whistle was blown. The march that was being played on the

school’s audio speakers stopped airing.

After that, another hand stretched out, and grabbed onto the eighth pole.

“Really. Kamijou Touma, what are you doing here?”

An accusing voice was heard.

“I’ll ask you for the reason later, so right now, leave quietly. The match has to stop, since it’s impossible to have a fair game when so many posts are down.”

The committee member, Fukiyose Seiri, looked at him with a surprised look.

The girl was wearing a thin jacket over her PE attire.

“You hear me? Do you still want me to force you to eat calcium?”

But Kamijou wasn’t looking at her, and neither could he hear her voice.

In Fukiyose’s hand…

There was a piece of paper between the metal post and her soft palm.

It was a piece of paper that was taped on.

Kamijou hoped that the thick piece of paper was an ordinary piece of paper like the one on the seventh pole.

There were blue words written on this piece of paper, and it seemed to be written in English.

PAcha!! Suddenly, a strange sound was heard.

Fukiyose’s body was shaking.

“Fuki…”

Her hand left the post lifelessly.

On the position she had been holding onto, there were the words ‘Wind Symbol’ written in blue pen.

“Fukiyose-san—!!”

Kamijou couldn’t help but shout out, but Fukiyose didn’t respond.

Just like this, Fukiyose’s hand left the pole, as she fell onto the ground. Pow. It was a lifeless way of falling down. She was on the ground, and couldn’t move her limbs. One could associate her expression with a deflated soft leather bag.

ParaParaPilaPila, around Fukiyose, the sound of air being compressed could be heard.

“Wha…what?”

Mikoto was surprised as she let out a cry. But among the participants, it seemed like only Mikoto had realized that something strange was going on. Though the other students looked suspiciously, nobody expected this to be an unknown attack from the magic side. As there were so many espers taking part in this battle, nobody would find it strange even if something unbelievable occurred.

At this moment, Tsuchimikado managed to get beside Kamijou.

“(…Kami-yan, hurry up and knock Fukiyose! She’s not a magician. She’ll be in danger if this continues!!)”

Hearing Tsuchimikado, Kamijou collected himself. He rushed towards Fukiyose Seiri, who was lying on the ground, lifted her up, and brought his right hand behind her.

Pashoo, a deflating sound could be heard.

Even so.

Even so, Fukiyose Seiri hadn’t recovered.

“Damn it…”

He knew the reason. Between Stiyl Magnus and Fukiyose Seiri, there was a difference in magic resistance. Even a magic specialist like Stiyl had been hit badly. Fukiyose Seiri, an ordinary person, was attacked without warning. Anyone could expect what kind of outcome this would warrant.

But.

No matter how anyone thought, the doubt in the brain couldn't be stopped.

Why?

"Tsuchimikado!!"

"Calm down, Kami-yan. This is just physical fatigue caused by removing some lifeforce—didn't I say that it's like severe heatstroke? The health room… probably won't be able to save her. If we call an ambulance now, we can still make it. At least it's better than letting her lie down in the sun."

He calmly said what they should do.

But, saying something like this wasn't convincing. It was like saying, because he was a specialist, he knew the seriousness of the situation, so he wouldn't purposely say anything that would make Kamijou optimistic.

From the tent in a corner of the school compound, several committee members were running out. They must have realized that something was wrong. One could also see teachers among them as well. In their eyes, it seemed that they felt that Kamijou and company were hesitating, not knowing what to do to take care of this girl who suddenly fell down.

The committee and staff members quickly grabbed Fukiyose's body from Kamijou's hand, and quickly moved somewhere to establish contact.

Kamijou Touma, who was left alone on the same spot, slowly got up.

He lowered his head and quickly swung his fist to the side. DANG!! With a metallic sound, the piece of paper that Oriana had stuck on the pole shook. Mikoto stared at Kamijou, looking surprised, but Kamijou didn't mind at all. On the piece of paper that was hit with Kamijou's right hand, the words on it vanished as if it melted away.

"What a brilliant idea, huh, Oriana Thomson…"

His vibrating lips started to move.

“If this was your doing, if you are willing to involve innocent people into this situation without guilt—”

He lifted his head, looked in front, and declared.

“—THEN I’LL USE THIS FIST OF MINE, TO SMASH THAT NONSENSICAL ILLUSION OF YOURS COMPLETELY!!!”

Between the lines 2

It hurt.

In Fukiyose Seiri’s subconsciousness, this was what she thought.

She knew that she was lying on a stretcher; she knew that she was being carried down an ambulance to the entrance of the hospital’s emergency department.

But there was no sense of reality.

Right now, she was in a state where she was unable to tell which way was up, down, left, or right, a groggy feeling. Either it was because she was lying on the stretcher, or there was something wrong with her subconsciousness. Seemed like the adults surrounding her were shouting to confirm whether she was awake, but she didn’t hear what they were talking about. To her ears, these words were like gibberish that a drunk would say, nobody could make out what he said. Among them, only the word ‘heatstroke’ inexplicably stayed in her ears.

Heatstroke.

It was a common illness seen during school PE lessons or school meets, so it was commonly neglected. The reason was because of rapid dehydration, and if it was severe, may have the risk of causing death.

Of course, this wasn't the first time that Fukiyose got heatstroke, so she could imagine how she fell.

But this time, there was a completely different feeling from before. Normally, when suffering from a normal heatstroke, the headache would disappear after a while. This time though, the headache didn't subside, and the pain was getting worse.

(…Ugh…)

As a member of the Daihaseisai Organizing Committee, Fukiyose had given basic emergency treatment before. Because of this, she was more aware than ordinary students that one could not belittle heatstroke.

What is wrong now? She thought.

She had gotten enough water, her body temperature was normal. It couldn't be fatigue, lack of sleep, or ill health. She had already done all the preparations to keep herself healthy, but to think that this still managed to happen.

(If so…the only thing I can think of is…)

Nervousness. Maybe?

Fukiyose thought, was I really that nervous?

Like a psychological problem, most people wouldn't feel it. If so…Fukiyose thought, she worked so hard on the preparations all for this day. If she failed here, everything would go to waste. The laughter she had when working on the preparations with the other committee members, the effort she put in to memorize the judging order, going to a café while on her way home to confirm the match schedules, all these efforts could be wiped away by 'failure'. Because of this, she had subconsciously become so nervous.

(…I'm just like an idiot…)

To impulsively work so hard, to impulsively fall down out of a sudden, to impulsively ruin the match.

Fukiyose thought, this is all my fault, I brought too much trouble to everyone

else. In order to not add on to other people’s burdens, I might as well quit getting involved in Daihaseisai.

(It’s entirely my fault.)

But, why?

Why had that boy been shouting at her with such a distorted expression.

That was not a reaction one would have when someone had heatstroke.

That was something that was out of his predictions. It felt that this situation was completely out of what he expected. Instead of saying that it was a sudden reaction to what happened, it was more like he was well-prepared and guarded, but still let something slip by.

What did he know?

What was he regretting?

(I want to know.)

She thought.

But she was more mindful about…

(So irritating…)

Fukiyose Seiri slightly moved her lips.

What Fukiyose was surprised about was that that boy, who always looked casual, and always gave the impression that he wouldn’t treat any matter seriously, would give that sort of expression.

Thinking about how that boy would continue to live with that expression for the next few days of Daihaseisai, Fukiyose inadvertently frowned.

(…I—really hate—those kind…)

She didn’t really like or hate Kamijou Touma.

Frankly, to her, he was just an outsider.

But up till now, Fukiyose Seiri was a committee member who worked hard in the preparations for Daihaseisai, all to let everyone be able to enjoy themselves. This was completely unrelated to her individual likes or dislikes.

Therefore, she really didn't want him to be the only one who continued to be like this in this event.

Because this was an event that she took part in.

For this, she continued to work hard till this day.

This may sound a bit capricious.

But she still wished for this event to be a success to anyone.

The stretcher, which was carrying the groggy Fukiyose, passed through the entrance of the emergency ward, and into the building. A doctor wearing a white lab coat was waiting for her over there. The doctor had the face of a frog, causing Fukiyose to almost laugh out.

The frog-faced doctor gave a completely different feeling as compared to everyone else, as he immediately gave orders clearly.

Fukiyose, who was still groggy, was unable to hear the contents of those words clearly. Her head was aching severely, and it seemed like several gears in her thoughts were loose. Even if she tried to integrate her thoughts together, her awareness continued to worsen.

Only the words 'Severe heatstroke' continued to bounce around in her head. This was an illness that was caused by severe dehydration, and if serious, would be bad for her circulatory system. Once the balance between the amount of oxygen and nutrients was lost, it may cause the internal organs to dysfunction, and in the worst case scenario, even cause death.

The extent of heatstroke may end up leading to a high risk.

If it was serious, it may cause damage to the other body parts, like a switch being turned on and off.

Thinking up till here, Fukiyose's teeth couldn't help but clatter.

(I don't want to die.)

She thought.

Fukiyose herself was unable to understand where the fear came from. Was it because she hated this sudden headache, or the chill that spread through her body? Or was it that she didn't know what was going to happen later, that made her feel so insecure? She was unable to get rid of this feeling, while her mind was continually being tortured by these complicated feelings.

She didn't know what the people around her were saying.

And she was unable to tell how bad the state of her body was currently.

Because of this, she didn't care about anything, and just raised one question.

"…Can…I be…saved…?"

She didn't know if her voice could be heard, and she didn't even feel confident that her lips moved.

But the frog-faced doctor heard this, immediately stopped issuing orders, and stared at Fukiyose's face.

In this groggy state, when she was apparently unable to hear other people's voices, the doctor's voice clearly reached Fukiyose's ears.

To the girl lying on the stretcher, he only said one thing.

His face gave a perfect smile that would gain anyone complete trust, and said,

"—Who do you think I am?"

Chapter 4: Did the Battle End in Victory or Not?
Being_Unsettled.

Part 1

Stiyl Magnus was sitting on the ground of the bus depot.

From a while back, the mechanics who were supposed to be there for the regular maintenance of the machines had been moving in and out. As Stiyl was in a blind corner, nobody noticed him. In normal circumstances, he'd use the people clearing field, so there was nothing he should be worried about. But right now, he was unable to use magic.

(I'm already looking like this just by losing my trump card. I haven't grown up one bit at all.)

Stiyl gently puffed out some air.

Thinking about it, it had been the same situation during the end of July, with his Innocentius. Once Stiyl was deprived of his trump card, he'd be extremely weak. After that incident, he had reflected on it, and put in quite a bit of effort to improve himself, like thinking of a mirage spell to dodge attacks, and improving the effectiveness of his runes, but these were just tactics to 'prevent the enemy from taking away his trump card', and it really felt like he was too lazy to put in some basic effort.

(Now that I'm in this ugly state, can I really protect that child…? If the enemy's target this time is that, what should I do? I'm in a…)

The ring of the cell phone interrupted his thoughts.

Stiyl pulled out the phone from his coat, and pressed the ‘call’ button.

It was from Tsuchimikado.

“Kami-yan has already destroyed Oriana’s Shorthand. Is there any changes to your body’s conditions?”

“Until you asked this, I didn’t feel anything at all…”

Stiyl carefully pulled out a rune card, and took a deep breath, held his breath, and exhaled, muttering a few words.

Voom. With a soft sound, an orange flame appeared on his finger.

There was no feeling of the rejection on his entire body that was caused by the interception spell.

“…Okay, seems like there’s no problem.”

“I see. Then please use that searching spell ‘All-Around Reality Circle’. I’ve already set up the colored paper and the magic circle beforehand. You know what to do?”

“Don’t belittle me,” Stiyl said.

Around his feet were the circle and the four pieces of colored paper that Tsuchimikado had set up, and in the middle of the circle, was the thick piece of paper that Oriana set up. Though he didn’t understand the positioning that was based on the Onmyoji arts, activating a spell that someone else set up wasn’t difficult.

“Are you alright over there? Isn’t Oriana’s spell in the middle of an arena? If you snuck in, isn’t it impossible for you to leave like that?”

Sneaking into a match wasn’t easy, and leaving halfway through was difficult as well. If one or two were to sneak out like that, they’d be seen.

But, Tsuchimikado calmly said,

“No problem nya. We have already left the arena.”

“…How did you do that?”

“There was a student hurt in front of our eyes. That person was diagnosed to have severe heatstroke, and was sent to the hospital. We pretended to take care of that unconscious student, and while helping her out of the arena, we slipped away.”

His tone wasn’t as frivolous as before.

That’s the voice of a magician, Stiyl thought.

“I see.”

He said.

“Did Kamijou Touma go berserk?”

“Since you knew about it, I’ll leave it to you. We’ll be launching our counterattack here. If we don’t, it’ll be disrespectful to that student.”

Tsuchimikado hung up the phone.

As Stiyl put the cell phone back in his coat, he thought,

(Nobody’s perfect. To think that this Kamijou Touma, who beat me the last time, has times of failure.)

But, he continued,

“—Am I feeling remorseful of my immaturity because of this?”

Was this the fact that Kamijou Touma, who had been unable to save the victim in front of him, realized so precisely and personally?

Stiyl didn’t have anything else to say.

He was just silently doing what he had to do, as if he didn’t want to burden his comrades any further, even if he didn’t realize it himself.

The four pieces of colored paper started to spin. The magic circle ‘All-Around Reality Circle’ was activating, ready to look for Oriana Thomson’s whereabouts.

Part 2

In the middle of the road, where the people were walking about, Oriana was looking up, staring at the electronic bulletin.

Many people weren't noticing what was developing on the screen. Even if some people did, they were just interested in the critical patient who had caused the match to be interrupted. It wasn't weird, just a critical patient, there was nothing much to talk about.

Well, at least that was how it looked on the surface.

"…This."

With one hand holding onto a billboard that was covered with white cloth, she muttered. On her work clothes, only the second button was buttoned up, as the attire revealed her navel, giving off some tension.

"Should be something that I didn't expect."

After saying this, Oriana's eyes left the electronic billboard.

She started to move.

There were still things to do.

Oriana's fingers gripped onto the thing beside her.

Kamijou Touma and Tsuchimikado Motoharu were running down the streets, knocking into other pedestrians. The pedestrians were giving them an accusing look, but right now, they didn't have time to bother about it.

Tsuchimikado turned on the loudspeaker of his phone, as both men were listening to Stiyl's voice as they continued to run.

"I have confirmed Oriana Thomson's whereabouts. She's near the Futsuka subway station in District 7. Give me some time, I'll give you a more accurate location."

"Futsuka station! We ran past it already!"

Tsuchimikado was the one who had been leading, now it was Kamijou who was leading. As the specialist, Tsuchimikado, was left behind.

"North…oh yeah, she seems to be heading north. The road is split into three, and I still don't know which one it is. It should be stabilized soon."

Before they finished hearing the conversation, Kamijou and Tsuchimikado had already passed through the street. On a side of the road, they could see the entrance to the underground subway. They continued to run in a northwards direction.

"Three streets…now…now…it's here. Hear carefully—"

"The one on the far right! I see her!!"

As Kamijou shouted out, the blonde lady who was twenty meters in front turned her head around. When she saw the two people who were passing through the crowd, she immediately panicked and ran to another road.

Kamijou and Tsuchimikado were chasing after her now.

The road was short, and it immediately ended at another road. But this road was different, there was no sense of hustle and bustle. The small shops were side by side in a corner, there was no welcoming atmosphere. Though there was an arched arcade as normally seen on a shopping street, it just made visibility even worse.

It was morning, and yet all the stores were closed. Maybe the retailers felt that this location wasn't viable in attracting customers, so they probably had opened some temporary stalls near the arenas, where it was much more crowded.

The lateral road extended left and right.

Oriana Thomson, who was wearing work clothes, ran to the left. When Kamijou and Tsuchimikado were about to catch her, the auto-bus passed them from behind.

Kamijou, who was just casually looking in Oriana's direction, was stunned.

She was running to the bus stop.

"Oh no…!!"

Oriana pushed something at the bus stop that looked like a button, causing the auto-bus to stop. Of course, the auto-bus robotically stopped.

While the auto-bus was still opening its door, Oriana stepped inside.

It was obviously hard to chase a moving bus by just running, but taking other buses that went in different directions wasn't going to make their job easier. As ordinary vehicles were banned from entering during Daihaseisai, it was hard to find any other vehicle. Besides, Kamijou couldn't drive.

The auto-bus only answered the command that it was issued right at the start.

If it was driven by a driver: when waving one's hands behind a bus, the driver may assume that the person was unable to catch up to the bus in time, and may stop. But for an auto-bus, asking for these may be a bit too strict.

Kamijou frantically ran.

The distance between the two of them was only 20 meters.

By the time Kamijou reached the bus-stop, the auto-bus had already moved away silently.

"DAMN IT!!"

Kamijou pressed the button, wanting the bus to stop, but it was too late. The bus, which was already moving, didn't respond as it accelerated.

Tsuchimikado, who was a step behind, watched the bus leave, and said,

“Oi, Kami-yan, I can’t see it from here. Are there any other passengers on that bus besides Oriana?”

“WHAT? IT DOESN’T MATTER RIGHT!?”

Seeing Tsuchimikado looking so relaxed, Kamijou anxiously replied.

Tsuchimikado said,

“Listen to me, this is very important.”

“…There doesn’t seem to be anyone else on board.”

“Doesn’t seem?”

“THERE’S NO ONE! AH, THIS MEANS THAT THERE’S NO ONE ELSE ON THE BUS! MAYBE EVERYONE HAD ALREADY ALIGHTED TO WATCH THE GROUP A RELAY RACE NEARBY! IT’S A MATCH WHERE ALL THE WINNERS ARE PARTICIPATING IN, SO IT’S AN ATTRACTION FOR THE FIRST DAY!! EVEN THE TOUR GUIDEBOOK INTRODUCES IT! SO WHAT!!?”

“If so, I’m relieved — Stiyl.”

Tsuchimikado wasn’t talking to Kamijou, but to Stiyl, who was on the other side of the phone call,

“Before this, when we were at the auto-bus depot, did you put some runes cards on the bus? If so, we can use it. I need you to help me with something. Destroy the card that you stuck on the bus no. 5154457.”

The other party’s response was rather fast.

“BOOM!”

An explosion was heard.

On the side of the bus that was slowly accelerating, a strong flame erupted. One second later, the body of the bus exploded. The bus that was lying on the road surface continued to spin on the ground without losing any momentum, as it

became a fiery lump of metal.

The flames that were rising up vertically, upon reaching the arcade, spread around.

With one hand, Tsuchimikado folded up the foldable phone—

“Isn’t the effect a bit… too strong nya?”

He revealed a confused look as he bitterly said,

Looking at the burning bus, Kamijou was speechless. It was true that the objective of Kamijou and company was to stop Oriana, but did it count as purely ‘stopping’ her?

Looking at Kamijou’s expression, Tsuchimikado realized what he was going to say, and said,

“Oh my. Didn’t expect that to be like this. I originally told him to light a fire in order to activate the bus’ safety device. Damn it, I thought that that was a tram, and got careless nya. That was probably a gasoline-electric hybrid bus that uses electricity and some natural gas.”

He then proceeded on without any sense of tension,

“However, since the people in the shops should be out doing business, and the satellites and unmanned helicopters are blocked by the arcade. There shouldn’t be too much of a commotion.”

“Why…why can you still remain so calm!? Where’s the fire extinguisher? If we don’t save her, she might really die!!”

“Hm, so what?”

Just as Tsuchimikado said this…

A vortex emerged from the raging pillar of fire, as the large fire was blown away by the tornado inside, and vanished without a trace. The wind that blew the flames away was filled with moisture, and it was also called ‘mist’. On what remained of the burnt bus lay a layer of moisture, like how water droplets stuck onto leaves. The mist caused everything to be covered with a thin layer of

moisture. This moisture didn't seem to evaporate off. In fact, it seemed to take away anything flammable, and prevent the flames from advancing.

Standing in the midst of this mist, was a woman.

Because of the moisture that she created, her hair, face, and work clothes were all slightly wet.

Oriana Thomson.

She was holding something that looked like a billboard with her right arm, a flashcard with her left hand, and a piece of paper that had the blue words 'Wind Symbol' in her mouth, between her teeth.

Oriana spit out the paper that she was biting aside, and pulled out a thread of saliva from her mouth.

She casually laughed,

"Hohoho. A flame that's not created by magic, that uses ordinary physics, is unable to heat up this nee-chan. However, this lady is still nervous enough to get so wet. See this? Even my underwear is already wet."

To think that in this juncture, she could still make a joke.

Facing this fact, Kamijou slightly squinted his eyes. Though this action was rather subtle, he really did squint his eyes.

"…The spell that you set up hurt someone who's completely unrelated to this. Do you still remember? It's the girl I was with the first time we met. Do you feel that girl has any relation to magic?"

"In this world, no one is unrelated to one another. As long as one has the desire, anyone can have some sort of relationship with one another, right?"

"You…you knew about all these. You knew about all these, and yet you never reflected on it?"

Kamijou's voice sounded rather fierce.

Hearing this tone, Oriana slightly frowned.

“Right now, it’s useless to talk about anything else, but I really didn’t intend to hurt that child. Nee-chan also didn’t want to hurt ordinary people, unlike now.”

After she finished speaking, Oriana tore a piece of paper with her mouth.

It sounded like glasses being knocked together.

In that instant,

“WAAAHH…!!”

With this sound, Tsuchimikado Motoharu bent his body forward. He held onto his flank with his hand, gnashing his teeth and staring at Oriana.

“Tsuchimikado!!”

Panicking, Kamijou moved closer to Tsuchimikado. The wound didn’t seem to open, but Tsuchimikado’s face was ghostly pale. Was it because of how he still continued to work despite getting injured?

Seeing this scene, Oriana laughed,

“Oh my, I thought you’re the one who got injured. Seems like I was wrong.”

There was another thick piece of paper on her lips. In blue ink, the words written on it were ‘Fire Symbol’.

KlaKaKaKa.

KlaKaKaKa. Tsuchimikado gradually collapsed to the ground.

Oriana subtly smiled,

“Let’s see how much you can endure…but just like this, you can’t beat this nee-chan.”

The moment she finished speaking, Tsuchimikado’s body finally seemed like it couldn’t take it anymore, and collapsed. He had lost all the strength in his arms and legs.

“What? What did you do to Tsuchimikado?”

“I just used the blue words to remove the fire element that signifies rebirth and regeneration. This uses the medium of sound to enter a person’s ears, and render a person unconscious if he’s injured enough. The ring just now was the trigger… looks like you aren’t hurt at all?”

Kamijou rubbed Tsuchimikado’s body with his right hand, but it was useless. To be precise, even if one removed this effect, it would continue to regenerate. This spell seemed to be different from the counterspell before. If one didn’t remove the original grimoire, the effect wouldn’t go away.

(A spell that knocks out anyone who’s injured to a certain extent without exception…)

In other words, as long as the condition still applied, that Tsuchimikado’s injuries weren’t healed. He would remain unconscious. Even Kamijou’s Imagine Breaker couldn’t heal Tsuchimikado’s wounds. This method wasn’t going to bring back his freedom.

Kamijou glared at Oriana, as she happily picked up the card that was lying on the ground with her left hand, and tossed it into the air. In an instant, the extremely light flashcard followed the wind and flew behind Oriana.

Kamijou’s face suddenly became hot.

“YOU BASTARD!!”

Oriana, who felt this rage, trembled happily. She licked her lips to moisten them, and said,

“If you want to save him, you’ll have to beat this nee-chan. If you don’t do that, until this nee-chan says stop, that guy will continue to be like that. However, I don’t know if he can hang on till then. He might not even last that long, right?”

Kamijou’s teeth were clattering.

He was trembling in rage.

“WHHH…WHY?”

Kamijou choked as he said.

If not for this case, Tsuchimikado Motoharu might have forgotten about his spy duties and enjoyed Daihaseisai. If there wasn't any mission, he'd probably enjoy it with everyone.

The same went for Stiyl Magnus.

If Oriana hadn't started off this situation, there would be no need for any battle. He wouldn't have had to come to Academy City. Even if he was to be here, he'd be here to see his old partner, Index.

And Fukiyose Seiri.

Though Kamijou didn't understand why she wanted to be a member of the Daihaseisai Organizing Committee. But since she wasn't forced by anyone, but volunteered herself to be a committee member, she must probably have some goal in mind.

To a professional magician, this might be trivial.

Compared to the 'Stab Sword' that could shake the world, this may not be anything much.

"I don't know what kind of value that 'Stab Sword' has. I really can't feel how that thing is going to change history, and how the world is going to change after that."

Kamijou said,

"However, I do know this. Hurting others for this stupid reason is wrong. If this 'Stab Sword' is something that will create these useless results, I'll destroy it with this hand of mine."

Hearing this, Oriana Thomson laughed, as if it wasn't worth hearing, a nonsensical joke that anyone would laugh at. Like the people who were involved in this case, there was no value in this.

She said,

“If this time, if I say that it’s because of work that I’m emotionless about this, maybe this might make me look cool a bit. But saying it this way…might be considered as dishonest to my client.”

There was no heavy feeling in her tone.

“Of course, I must finish my objectives. As for how I do it, just leave it to this nee-chan.”

The rising temperature inside Kamijou started to distort like a hurricane.

He was gnashing his teeth so hard that his molars were about to break.

“STOP TREATING—”

He clenched his right fist.

“—OTHER PEOPLE’S LIVES AS GAMES—!!”

He sent a straight punch over.

Seeing Kamijou like this, Oriana continued to smile.

And it seemed like she was really happy.

Part 3

The distance between Kamijou and Oriana was only 10 meters.

But Kamijou’s fist couldn’t reach her.

Oriana’s left hand moved, as she tore out a flashcard.

The green words written on the thick piece of paper were ‘Wind Symbol’.

An ice wall about 50cm thick appeared on the road, separating Kamijou and Oriana.

Kamijou and Oriana exchanged glances through the transparent ice wall.

Not looking at the 3m tall ice wall in front of him, Kamijou hit it with his right fist.

Piang!!

The sound of glass breaking could be heard.

As if there was gunpowder inside, the ice wall shattered the instant it was hit.

But Kamijou couldn't see Oriana in front of him.

Like a portrait drawn on a piece of glass shattering, her figure shattered together with the shattered ice.

Kamijou gasped, wondering what was going on.

(The function of ice is—)

Suddenly, he felt a chill.

(—light…refraction!?)

Besides him, something started to bounce.

Just as his eyes narrowed due to the approaching gust of wind.

Pow!

He felt that his cheeks were cut by something.

A thick liquid flowed down his wounded face before feeling this pain.

"Hm. This sharpness is rather stimulating, isn't it?"

From the far end of Kamijou's vision, Oriana immediately tore another flashcard with her mouth, activating a new spell.

The super-thin stone blades flew over, cutting deeply into Kamijou's face.

"Hoho, I felt it the first time I held your hand. To think that there are so many strange kids gathered in Academy City."

The lady must be referring to Kamijou's right hand.

But Kamijou didn't have time to reply.

There was no need to touch the wounds in order to know how deep they were.

To think that Oriana could use this spell to knock out any enemy who was injured to some extent by using the sound created by the thick piece of paper!

(Damn, damn it…!)

Kamijou felt a chill flow down his body, and inadvertently covered his ears.

Seeing him like this, Oriana put another thick piece of paper between her lips.

"The next one will be a shadow sword. This nee-chan won't let you get tired of this, okay?"

As she tore the card, swinging her left hand about, a dark sword appeared in her hand. The sword, which could be reshaped to any length, extended to 7m long, and stabbed onto Kamijou's shadow that was on the ground. At that moment,

POM! The shadow near Kamijou's feet exploded.

Like someone stepping on a land mine, Kamijou's body was blown up into the air. He spun in the air like a dragonfly, getting into a protective posture before he landed on the ground.

The arm that smacked onto the asphalt pavement hurt, but compared to this,

(Why? Why didn't she use that technique that knocked out others like Tsuchimikado!?)

Compared to being relieved over being saved, Kamijou was even more troubled now that he couldn't understand what the enemy was thinking. Since the enemy had a trump card that could beat the opponent, she couldn't possibly have

forgotten this.

Oriana, who was in an advantageous position now, jumped away from Kamijou, pulling the distance apart.

Seeing Kamijou's puzzled look, Oriana subtly giggled,

"Humph, this nee-chan has no interest in using the same spell over and over again."

With a relaxed expression, she said,

"The five elements form the basis of modern Western Magic. From an alchemist's viewpoint, anyone can have them, but this is just a prelude. Though it's easy to use, on the other hand, it's easy for the enemy to read one's own attacks, and come up with a defensive spell to counter it. Wouldn't anyone be worried about being too simple if one keeps using this in an actual battle? This nee-chan doesn't want to make my enemy feel bored, so she prepared a lot of these cards, so these grimoires that I prepared must be torn away like a calendar. This—is—how—it—is."

Kamijou ignored Oriana's words, and intended to close the distance.

Seeing Kamijou act like this, Oriana tore another flashcard.

After that, a huge gust of wind appeared behind Kamijou. Being pushed by the wind from behind, Kamijou's speed continued to increase, as he continued to stumble. Now that the distance was shortened, Oriana raised the billboard on her right side, and smashed it into Kamijou's jaw with a hook-like manner.

Right before Kamijou fell from that impact, Oriana then thrust the corner of the billboard into Kamijou's stomach.

With a blunt sound, Kamijou's body bent into a '<' shape, falling backwards.

"Ke…AHHH…!!"

Kamijou's thought process and breathing stopped at the same time, and he couldn't even tell which side was the right side up. To him, the four directions were all messed up now, rotating all over the place. Even so, Kamijou still

placed his hand on the ground to support himself, trying to get up.

“Hm.”

Oriana tore another flashcard.

“So useless, we’re only in the prelude, and yet your legs have no strength left?”

A certain power was activated.

Between Kamijou’s back and the ground, something that was like steam erupted, tossing Kamijou into the air. This time, Kamijou didn’t have enough time to defend himself as he rolled on the ground.

Kamijou tried his hardest to gather his consciousness that was about to fail at any moment, as he considered the situation that was right in front of him.

“Ugh…”

Now even his thought process was painfully cut off.

Kamijou gritted his teeth, enduring the extremely sharp pain that was spreading throughout his body.

“Damn it…why?”

Kamijou continued to think, only doubts appeared in his mind.

“…She did say that she won’t use the same spell a second time. So why are there so many different…”

He didn’t know what the four or five main things are that she was talking about. All he knew about was mixing the color and the name together. In this situation, by continuously using magic like that over and over again, all the combinations would be used up in an instant.

“Hohoho. Combinations don’t just work like that. You should be able to tell from this nee-chan, right?”

Oriana put another flashcard into her mouth with her left hand.

“!”

Kamijou inadvertently prepared himself, but he was unable to transfer his strength throughout his body.

Seeing the boy in front moving rather slowly, Oriana didn’t attack, only choosing to lick the thick piece of paper with her tongue, from the short rectangular side, then the corner, then the long side.

Stunned, Kamijou stared at what Oriana was doing, and finally said with much difficulty,

“…The edge? It got something to do with the edge when you held the thick piece of paper in your mouth…?”

“Un. That’s also one requirement. This is the basis of Western Astrology. From zero degrees to 9 degrees, 171 degrees to 189 degrees, 81 degrees to 99 degrees, 111 degrees to 129 degrees, 54 degrees to 66 degrees, 0 to 1 degree, and there are more laws for these coordinates. The theory is that ‘the relationship between the planets and the constellations will have different functions due to different angles. Do you need me to give you a lesson on the relationship between stars, colours, and elements?”

Oriana grinned.

“Because this nee-chan added in page numbers to identify them, so strictly speaking, I can’t re-use the same spell again. Like how lost time can’t be retrieved again, the pages that were flipped can never be retrieved again.”

She moved the flashcard, now slightly damp on the edges, and moved it along her upper lip.

“This is the limit of nee-chan. No matter how hard I continue write grimoires, the ‘original’ won’t stabilise, and will continue to lose control and self-destruct. Also, my words are too messy to be understood. Whether as a magician or a mage, my strength is only half-baked.”

Oriana slightly narrowed her eyes.

“However, because of this, this nee-chan continues to write grimoires to create

new spells. Since nee-chan knows she's using a half-baked original, the most each book can last is one hour, if it's fast, it'll self-destruct in several seconds. Because I'm aware that I'll lose if I ever stopped to compromise, this nee-chan wants to continue improving—this is called 'not forgetting one's original intention,' right?"

After saying this, Oriana used her teeth to bite the damp piece of paper.

But she didn't tear it off this time.

She placed the thick piece of paper on her tongue, and without moving her mouth too much, she said in an obscure voice,

"Right now, I'm going to use the symbol of wind that's in red. The angle is at 0 degree conjunction, total number of pages, 575, disposable-type spell, Blade Crater.[8] You've been warned."

She paused,

"You'll die if you move."

She declared,

"But if you don't move, you'll surrender on the next move. You're not a kid anymore, so decide what you should choose — pick your poison."

—Oriana pulled the thick piece of paper aside. On the thick piece of paper, pulled from the metal ring, were the red words 'Wind Symbol'.

(…)

Kamijou placed his hand on the ground, supporting himself as he tried to get up, but his body, which was still shaking, was unable to respond immediately. Just trying to put a knee on the ground was difficult for him.

He thought, it's good that no one else is around. If anyone were to see this, it'd cause a commotion.

(Don't move…huh?)

—Remembering what Oriana had said, Kamijou felt something crawling below the ground. With Oriana as the center, there was a circle on the ground of a meter radius. Outside the circle, there were patterns similar to those of tree branches. It looked like those capillaries around the eyeballs that were filled with blood. The patterns passed by Kamijou, through the roads, below the bicycles, the vehicles and the billboards, all the way in front of Tsuchimikado, who was lying on the ground.

“—You’ll die if you move.”

—The patterns on the ground gave off an irritating vibrating sound.

I might as well admit defeat, Kamijou thought weakly. He was totally unable to predict what kind of attack Oriana would use next, and thus he couldn’t think of any counter-strategies. Also, she did say that the damage would be enough to stop his heart if he took the next attack directly.

(If I don’t move, the next move will be checkmate…)

The difference between the two choices was, the latter ‘would solve this without killing him’. He’d probably be knocked unconscious like Tsuchimikado. Just like that.

After this, Oriana would run away, but Stiyl would still chase after her. Victory wouldn’t be decided just because Kamijou fell. Even if the amateur fell, no one would blame him. Didn’t the specialist, Tsuchimikado, suffer defeat as well? It was unreasonable for him to continue to resist.

(Then, what should I do next…)

But, Kamijou continued to clench his right fist.

He clenched it tightly, till his fingernails sunk into his palm. The sudden influx of willpower filled his hand with strength.

He then gave the order to his weak legs, and steadily stood on the ground.

The feelings of fear and resistance continued to swirl about inside him, but he was thinking, (Can I forget about Fukiyose Seiri’s “Do you have any plan on letting Daihaseisai succeed? You useless fellow.”—)

(—No matter whether the enemy is a professional magician, or whether it involves some important deal, I don't care about these! Fukiyose-san herself chose to be member of Daihaseisai's Organizing Committee, and continued to work hard till this day. Right now, her efforts are about to go to waste! Should I sit here and do nothing!? Will this Kamijou Touma settle down with ease just like that?)

"WO……AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!"

Kamijou roared, using his entire strength to run forward. He hadn't regained his balance, and he looked like he was standing in a plane that was in the midst of turbulence, but he was definitely running forward.

At this moment, Oriana spit out the piece of paper that she was biting on.

The spell was instantly activated completely.

Part 4

Blade Crater.

With Oriana as the center, the power was transferred to the patterns, like bricks engraved on the wall, or like capillaries around the eyeballs that were filled with blood.

The vacuum blades started to swing about wildly.

There were numerous patterns depicted on the ground. The grooves were facing upwards like a pickaxe facing upwards. The blades swayed from down to up, and the total number of strikes was 208. Like a spider web extending outwards, the world of blades sliced through anything that was above it.

(…! You little idiot!!)

Oriana Thomson gnashed her teeth.

On first glance, it looked like an attack that was randomly set up, but she had actually intended for the blades to avoid where Kamijou was standing. However, Kamijou ignored this, and stepped outside.

Oriana originally intended to use the vacuum blades that were coming out of the ground to surround Kamijou, making him unable to move before rendering him unconscious. Like how she didn't kill off the professional magician, Tsuchimikado, in the first place, Oriana found that having someone dead would affect her own 'work'.

At the same time Kamijou stepped out, the spell started to activate.

The vacuum blades shooting out from the ground avoided the safety zone that didn't have anyone in it. The 208 vacuum blades started to cut the billboards and bicycles that were above the patterns mercilessly.

However, he ran out of the safety zone, and jumped into the vortex of blades. Besides getting cut, blood spilling out, and death, there was nothing else waiting for him.

However.

"!!"

Kamijou's body wasn't cut.

The numerous blades shoot upwards from below the ground, and the 208 guillotine blades sliced the surrounding air—yet it was ineffective on him. He just so happened to jump into the area where there were less blades shooting out. Where Kamijou was standing could be considered as a second safety area that Oriana prepared. Oriana didn't know how he figured it out, or whether it was all a coincidence.

(If so!!)

Oriana used a standby spell. To be able to escape the field of blades, whether she actually prepared it or not, the entire area was separated by the blades, so what Kamijou did was to just run from a hole in the hive nest to another hole.

He wouldn’t be able to escape.

However, Oriana’s predictions were wrong again.

“WOOOHH!!”

Kamijou, who was roaring, waved his right hand at the vacuum blades in front of him. On first glance, it looked like a stupid act that would get his arm sliced off, yet the vacuum blades were shattered.

Not only were the blades in front of him shattered, all the blades that Oriana had released were shattered.

Crack! A moment later, the sound of something breaking could be heard.

At this moment, Kamijou had already taken a step forward.

Three steps left. The distance between them was about to become zero.

(What…!? To think that that right hand is able to negate it to this extent…!!)

Oriana, who was unable to understand what was going on, focused on the enemy in front anyway. She bit on the flashcard that had yellow command text written on it.

This time, the spell was called **Drop Rest**.[9] It looked like a compressed air gun, and when it hit directly, would turn the target’s consciousness inside out. It was an attack that would knock out others without hurting them. She originally intended to let the airgun pass through the blades and hit the target that was surrounded by the blades. This could be said to be something completely unexpected.

Even if it was completely unexpected, Oriana fired it without any hesitation.

“Take this—!!”

Before she finished speaking, Kamijou’s right fist had already punched away the front of the Drop Rest spell. The destroyed gun flew around pointlessly and vanished into thin air.

(Wh…why…!?)

While she was still shocked, Kamijou took another step forward. Two more steps left. Oriana was in a situation where she was unable to understand what was going on. The enemy was in front of her, yet she didn't know how to react.

(How is he able to respond!? Even if he has a special right hand, how can an amateur predict my attacks!? There must be some sort of reference material, that's…)

The enemy stepped forward. One more step.

In Oriana's mind, an answer appeared like an electric shock.

(Oh yeah. I'm unable to use the same magic over and over again! In other words, there won't be a similar attack coming from the same direction! So he knows the answer…)

Oriana Thomson could not re-use the same spells that she had used before.

In other words, each place that was attacked wouldn't be attacked the same way.

Of course, a place that was attacked by a flame sword could be attacked with ice bullets. But the scope of attack for both the sword and the bullets were different, and so such a difference would create a 'loophole'.

What Kamijou did was to move along those places that were attacked. Since there wouldn't be similar attacks, in other words, he just needed to worry about attacks other than it, and responding to attacks would be much easier. It seemed like somebody taught him that while the next attack would contain, there were 'escape channels' to be taken advantage of.

(What? I originally continued to use the same spells in order to seal off all the dead ends and let the enemy be unable to think of a countermeasure. In the end, this…)

Oriana's lip twisted inadvertently.

She didn't know what kind of smile that was, but she knew that it was a smile.

(…ends up being a dead end instead, and I ended up giving the enemy a hint on how to counter it! Haha, such a good boy. This nee-chan loves this kind of creativity the most!!)

In an instant, both of them were within range of each other.

Right now, Oriana didn't have the luxury to use her flashcards. She swung the billboard that she was holding on the right side downwards, and this time, she aimed for Kamijou's head.

However, Kamijou Touma dodged to one side. With one foot as the axis, Kamijou dodged aside. The billboard grazed Kamijou's nose, creating a 'whoosh' sound that could be heard, and slammed onto the asphalt.

(…!!)

Oriana Thomson was speechless, as she just looked in front.

At the same time, the boy's right fist fired in from point blank range.

"WO—"

Kamijou roared, exhaling all the air in his lungs.

"—AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!"

Gathering all the strength and speed of his body into his right fist, Kamijou aimed for the center of Oriana Thomson's face. The shock from the impact reverberated from his tightly-clenched fist to his wrist, hand, and shoulder.

Crack!!

With this loud and heroic sound, Oriana's body flew backwards.

Just like that, Oriana, who was surrounded by this force that was aided by Kamijou's momentum, fell and rolled on the ground.

With the wind, the billboard fell out of Oriana's loose hand and landed beside Kamijou.

Kamijou felt that his right fist was somewhat numb.

(I succeeded…? Did I manage to prevent the deal of this ‘Stab Sword’ magic tool from taking place?)

Anyway, what Oriana had been carrying was in his hands. Though he was still worrying about the unconscious Tsuchimikado, and the trading partner who snuck into Academy City, it seemed like they had averted the greatest danger, no?

“Ho…”

Just as Kamijou was thinking about all this, he heard this laughter that moved with the wind.

Kamijou frantically turned back and looked.

“Hoho, you’re really rude. See, my button came off!”

Oriana, who was lying on the ground, raised her upper body like how someone finishes taking a nap. Her right hand, which was originally holding onto the billboard, was now pressing down near her breasts, since her work clothes were wide open now.

(No…no effect!?)

Kamijou was somewhat stunned. In contrast, Oriana didn’t seem to mind.

“Ugn. This nee-chan isn’t a fighting queen that’s full of muscles, but your movement wasn’t straight, and the trajectory was somewhat off. You’re hurt, so your sense of balance is somewhat off as well, so the impact wasn’t as big. Oh yeah, overall—”

She paused, and then proceeded on,

“—considering that it’s a punch from an amateur, it’s not too bad. But to nee-chan, who’s used to facing off against others who’ll read these attacks and counter, this standard is somewhat unsatisfactory.”

After saying this, she pulled the flashcard in her left hand near her mouth.

Kamijou placed his entire body on alert, but the physical pain of his bruises

worked up out of a sudden. The gathering of the pain prevented his body from moving momentarily.

“!!”

Seeing Kamijou’s face getting distorted due to the pain, Oriana happily tore off another page.

Unexpectedly however, she didn’t launch another attack.

A gust of wind surrounded Oriana, and in an instant, she was taken away by the mini-tornado.

In a second, Oriana passed through the gap between the ceiling of the arcade and the buildings, and reached the top of the building.

Even though the billboard that she left behind was at Kamijou’s feet.

On the other hand, the ‘Stab Sword’ was an important trading item.

Oriana was standing at the edge of the roof, as she turned around and tore off a flashcard with her mouth.

“I’ll leave that thing to you. However, don’t think that this is over yo? The real action will heat up later.”

The whisper-like voice clearly reached Kamijou as if it had been conducted through the air. He looked at the ‘Stab Sword’ on the ground, then turned to look at Oriana, who was on the roof.

“…Why?”

He raised a doubt, and though it was soft, the voice seemed to reach Oriana’s ears.

“Why ask why?”

“The ‘Stab Sword’ is in my hands. And yet you’re not forced into a tight corner, so why are you pulling back so easily…?”

Oriana softly laughed,

“Why, huh? Isn’t guessing the reason somewhat interesting?”

She jumped towards the center of the building, such that Kamijou, who was looking up, was unable to see her due to the angle.

Oriana’s figure vanished from the gap between the ceiling of the arcade and the wall of the buildings.

“Wait a sec! The spell that you set on Tsuchimikado—!!”

Kamijou suddenly shouted out, but Oriana had already vanished. The ceiling of the arcade covered the sky completely. She may be hiding inside the buildings, or she might have jumped off to another building.

All he heard was a voice,

“The spell only lasts for 20 minutes, and will stop working after that. You’re really an esper who likes to worry.”

After she said this, nothing else could be heard.

Kamijou looked around. Oriana’s figure and voice were completely gone.

Part 5

Seemed like Tsuchimikado would only wake up a while later.

Kamijou was wondering whether he should be chasing after Oriana, but finally decided to stay behind. He couldn’t leave behind the unconscious Tsuchimikado and the ‘Stab Sword’ that was disguised as a large billboard. If he was to run around with it, his speed would slow down, and if it was taken back by Oriana, it’d be adding insult to injury.

Thus, Kamijou decided to call Stiyl.

But he didn’t know Stiyl’s number. Although Kamijou felt a bit sorry, he decided to rummage through Tsuchimikado’s pockets and borrow his phone. Searching through the call records, he pressed the call button.

Stiyl’s suggestion was rather simple and straightforward.

“Alright then, destroying the ‘Stab Sword’ with your right hand should be a piece of cake. With that, we can prevent the deal that Lidvia Lorenzetti is planning. I’m not too sure about the situation with Academy City’s security, but they should have received contact about a bus burning. Before anyone else gets there, hurry up and destroy that thing, then leave.”

“But, is it alright to destroy it so easily? If we anger Oriana and the rest, wouldn’t they attack Academy City?”

“If they do that, the one getting surrounded will be them. This is Academy City, and to the magic side, it’s equivalent to being in the midst of the enemy’s camp. If they’re people who’ll plan this trade calmly, they’ll calmly leave the place. Even if there are disputes among the parties, they’ll proceed with it once they reach a safe area. To a magician, this place is too dangerous.”

Academy City was a dangerous place. To Kamijou, who practically stayed here, this explanation didn’t seem real to him. However, since it was a professional speaking, Kamijou decided to follow.

“Roger that. I’ll use my right hand to destroy the ‘Stab Sword’.”

“Hurry up. I’ll be discussing with the higher ups on what to do later on.”

After Stiyl finished speaking, he hung up the phone.

“Can’t you even say the word ‘please’?”

Kamijou cut the call, and put the phone back into Tsuchimikado’s pocket. Seeing Tsuchimikado like this without reacting at all made Kamijou feel chilly, but as one listened carefully, one could hear him breathing as if he was sleeping. Seemed like his life was not in danger.

“Alright.”

After saying this, Kamijou turned to look at the billboard that had fallen onto the ground.

It was a large rectangular billboard that was covered with a piece of white cloth. Maybe because of the length and width of the ‘Stab Sword’, the excess areas were filled with other materials to keep the rectangular shape. Though it was covered in white cloth, once the shape of the sword was revealed, it would immediately garner attention.

Just using the power of the Imagine Breaker would be enough to destroy the ‘Stab Sword’. Kamijou decided to remove the white cloth, wanting to see whether he could really destroy it.

“Ugh…! What is this? It’s…rather hard.”

Seemed like an imitation of how the industries wrap their products, as the white cloth was wrapped rather tightly. The knots were tied so professionally, and so it was hard to release when one didn’t even know where to begin with. It wasn’t like a rope where he could just tear it apart using force. Kamijou, who was at his wits end, could only tug at the cloth, and after pulling it for a while, he at least felt that the cloth was loose.

As long as a side was loose, the white cloth that was used to wrap the item would lose its hardness. Kamijou peeled the layers of white cloth one by one, and the item that had been wrapped in several layers gradually revealed its original shape.

(What kind of shape does that ‘Stab Sword’ have?)

As Kamijou thought about this, he undid the cloth.

But, upon undoing the white cloth,

He didn’t see the ‘Stab Sword’.

“What?”

Kamijou inadvertently stopped undoing the white cloth.

Like the bandages of a mummy being unraveled, the thing inside the white cloth

was revealed. It was a long thin billboard. Seemed like this billboard, a thin piece of iron that was painted on, was made by students, and it was a decorative item to be placed at a student's stall during Daihaseisai. The words 'Ice-cream stall' were written in a cute form.

But.

"What…is this?"

Wasn't the billboard a disguise? Transporting the 'Stab Sword' directly in Academy City would be too obvious, and with those dimensions, it was almost impossible to even put it inside a bag. So Oriana had disguised herself as a painter, disguising the 'Stab Sword' as a billboard, wrapped it with white cloth, and spent some effort in letting others see it.

However, no one expected her to take a real billboard.

The entire premise of this had collapsed.

Where was the 'Stab Sword'?

Why had Oriana appeared in front of them, only to escape?

Was the premise that Stiyl Magnus and Tsuchimikado Motoharu talked about true?

Also, were they really dealing the 'Stab Sword'?

"What's going on…?"

Kamijou Touma muttered.

Nobody could answer his doubts. The professional magician, Tsuchimikado, was now unconscious, and the person who had planned this, Oriana Thomson, wasn't around.

But he continued to ask again.

The exact line.

"What's going on…?"

Between the lines 3

Oriana Thomson was walking on the streets.

She was at a temporary clothes stall that was set up near a large department store. Due to fears of terrorist bombings during Daihaseisai, Academy City had stopped providing locker service. Instead, an item deposit service that ‘ensured the goods and kept them manually’ was used.

Oriana gave the plastic number card to the receptionist, a young lady, who was revealing a puzzled look, wondering why the painter would be using a cloakroom. In response, Oriana smiled, and told her, “If I don’t take care of my own belongings, paint might end up on my purse.” The receptionist gave a response, indicating that she understood.

Oriana took the handbag and left the item deposit area.

What was inside the handbag wasn’t a purse, but clothes.

Since she didn’t have the billboard in her hands, it was too eye-catching for Oriana to disguise herself as a painter. It would be unnatural if she continued to wear the work clothes, and just walk about without doing anything. Also, the second button of her work clothes had come off due to the battle just now. Though the first and third buttons were alright, as her breasts were rather ample, one could see them from the seam.

(…I’ve used quite a few spells this time. Really, there’re quite a few people who I really want to be gentle with again.)

Although Oriana had quite a number of spells at her disposal, there was the limitation of being unable to re-use a spell that had been used before, so she had to pause and think about what could happen after that, and use whatever means

to battle. But this time, she had used two ‘killer spells’ that she had never expected to use, only for the enemy to escape. Though she was satisfied with the excellent results, just thinking about how she was not going to use those spells a second time makes her somewhat lonely.

“Can I consider this as meeting a worthy opponent? Let’s change before I think of a countermeasure.”

Oriana muttered as she looked around, looking for a place to change her clothes. It was too eye-catching if she entered a building with her painter clothes still on.

(Never mind, I can change at any place I want to.)

Oriana wildly came up with this conclusion as she left the crowded two-way street. After walking into the alley, where no one was around, and put down her handbag. Seemed like she was really intending to change clothes there.

She intended to finish her report as she changed her clothes, so she tore another card, and stuck it to the ground with tape.

A horizontal line of orange words appeared on the dusty surface.

It was a spell that acted as a display of her superior, Lidvia Lorenzetti’s voice, and translated her words into text.

“Is this urgent? You keep using different methods to contact me every time. It’s troublesome for me when I have to receive these messages.”

“Hm. This is the policy of nee-chan, so please be a bit forgiving.”

Oriana’s words would appear as text on the other side as well.

She unbuttoned the buttons on the front of her top as she explained. Just like this, the clothes bounced outward like a spring. It was not really suited for her anyway.

“I’m trying to tell you that the first phase is complete. This nee-chan is trying to tell you that though there are quite a few troublesome issues, you can relax, since I’ve already checked the places. I even had the time to walk around.”

Oriana broke free from the tight clothing, and puffed out some air to calm herself down. She then took off her top without hesitation. Because she was not wearing a bra, the stripping of her upper body was complete.

“You said that quite a few things happened, what’s going on?”

The original paragraph vanished, and a new wall of text appeared on the card horizontally from left to right.

“Hm? Oh, that. I was hit straight in the face by a boy, and the button came off; seems like he saw my breasts. No, I’m certain that he saw them.”

“…As a Sister who’s supposed to be pure and poor, how can you be so nonchalant about this?”

Another paragraph appeared. This was a spell that reads words and thoughts, and prevented translation errors. Sometimes, it also showed silence.

“Deary me, what’s with this contemptuous attitude? Didn’t Adam and Eve walk around the world with a leaf over their genitals in the Old Testament? Compared to the global scale of that shameful act, this is nothing.”

“…”

Oriana placed her hands on her pants, before realizing that the other party didn’t respond. Seeing this silent response on the card, a drop of sweat inadvertently flowed down her face.

“Eh, oh my? Hello, hello? Not again, what are you angry about? Okay, don’t cry, don’t cry. This nee-chan won’t say any jokes about the Bible.”

“I’m not crying. Anyway, how are your injuries?”

The long silence vanished, as a new block of text appeared.

“Oh, no big deal.”

Oriana said. She took off her shoes, her belt, and pulled down the zipper. As she placed her hands on the edge of her pants, which was revealing a bit of her butt —

“I can’t really say that…I’m completely uninjured…my face is a bit swollen, and maybe even my heart may be punched through…”

Suddenly, her body jerked sideways.

Oriana was shaking her head, as if she was trying to prevent herself from falling asleep, as her two hands pulled down the pants. At least she was wearing panties, and as Oriana’s legs left the pants, her body was somewhat imbalanced.

“Will it affect the plan?”

“It won’t okay? I can tell. Just leave everything to this nee-chan.”

Though the other party couldn’t see it, she was trying her best to force this smile. Now that she was only wearing panties, she bent her upper body and opened the handbag near her feet to look for a change in clothes. Her movements were abnormally gentle, and her body was so soft that it seemed that she could place her entire palm flat on the ground.

“Un. Now this nee-chan is going to change into her battle clothes. It’ll be easier for me to work if I can stop giving the impression of being a worker with my clothes…”

Now which one should I choose? Oriana continued to rummage through the bag. Through the opened zipper, one could see that all her clothes were rather fanciful.

At this moment, a line of incredulous words came from Lidvia.

“What? You’re changing clothes?”

“Didn’t I tell you already? My button came off, and I nearly exposed my breasts to others, or maybe they might have seen it. I can’t wear this as my clothes are damaged. It’s just like that.”

“…I’m trying to say, why can you be so casual about this?”

It’s my personality, okay? Oriana thought as she ignored her, taking out several pieces of clothing from her bag.

“Also, I forgot to take the billboard back when I escaped. When I’m wearing work clothes and yet not holding anything, this nee-chan feels that it’s too unnatural.”

“…Your meaning?”

“Oh, I remember. The billboard was taken by the enemy.”

“…What’s going on…”

“Seems like the contents inside were revealed. And the fact that this nee-chan was just running around with garbage should be clear as well.”

“Eh, oh my? It’s okay. Even if the issue about the ‘Stab Sword’ is revealed, it won’t affect the deal. We won’t get disqualified just by getting a demerit point. Also, the actual battle is different from the battle. Even if we get deducted a point for taking advantage, we might even get the victory in the end.”

Wearing only a pair of panties, Oriana picked up the bra with her two hands and pulled it near her breasts. She started to calculate the compatibility of the colors and the degree of revealing.

“I’ll finish my job, and won’t let anyone else affect this deal. No matter who the person is, he won’t be able to prevent this dealing from happening. If this deal can bring happiness to everyone, it’ll be more reason for me to do this, right?”

This was her last sentence.

She looked at the sky as she said this.

The sky of Academy City was so blue and clear that it was close to signifying peace and leisure, though there were the occasional fireworks being fired.

Part 6

“So we’ve been had, huh?”

After finishing the conversation with the head of Academy City, Aleister Crowley, Archbishop Laura Stuart of the Anglican Church, who had many subordinates at her command, sighed. It had been hours since the two of them had contacted each other, and since there was a 9 hour difference between Japan and London, it should be noon in Japan now. Surrounding the St. George Cathedral were the darkness and silence of the night, and the cold air of the ground.

She was sitting on a chair in front of the altar, and as her blond hair, which was more than twice her height, lay on the floor, she puffed out some air and extended both her arms backwards. With both hands, she grabbed the roots of her hair that was too long, and swung it forcefully like she was swinging a rod. She cleanly grabbed the front of her wavy hair that moved like a slithering snake, and used a silver hairpin to clip her hair with one hand. In an instant, she reverted back to her normal hairstyle that looked like her hair was cut in half.

Though it looked a bit crude, as she was already skilled in doing this, her movements had a beautiful sense of refinement and grace. Especially when the blond hair created ripples under the moonlight, this light was like a piece of art with beauty that could fill the entire hall.

One of the Twelve Apostles, John, once prohibited women from keeping long hair, and forced nuns to keep their hair short and keep it within their hoods.

The reason was that the long hair of a woman would attract a man and cause him to fall. In modern times, it may seem like a laughable, twisted reason…but Laura’s hair was so shiny that it could make anyone change their mind.

“So these are all true?”

Laura grabbed the bundle of documents that was on her thigh with one hand and waved it. It was a twenty-page report by the British Museum regarding the ‘Stab Sword’.

On first glance, it was just a random action, but there were hidden emotions inside it.

The emotion was called anger, and the temperature was extremely cold.

Hearing Laura speak, who seemed to be talking to herself, the other party paused for a breath, and responded.

It was the voice of a middle-aged man.

“I’m really sorry. You’ve appointed us to manage this for a long time, but till today, we didn’t find it at all. In the end, we’ve continued to give the wrong instructions…”

“It’s alright, you don’t have to panic. I’m not angry with you. Besides, it’s tough on you, to continue to work till this time.”

Laura sensed that under the light that was shining into the interior of the Cathedral—near the entrance—that man was cowering in fear. Seeing that, it seemed that the other person was rather fearful for being under the same moonlight as Laura.

His name was Charles Conder.

He was the highest authority of archaeology, and the ‘keeper’ of the British Museum.

Compared to the ‘investigators’ who were running around the world, looking for artifacts and collecting them, his job was to manage and restore the items inside the Museum. For one to enter the bureau that had lasted for 1,000 years and maintained individual historical items that were up till 3,000 years old, one had to have the ‘brain of a scholar’ and ‘hands of an artist’ that was of the highest order in the world.

Right now, he was at the level where he was considered to have the capability, but his experience was unrecognized.

Among the items that they processed through, there were quite a few magical items…though the people working at the British Museum were ordinary people who had nothing to do with magic, even the head wasn’t exempted. The Anglican Church provided support by giving advice on the items through Theological, Religious, and ethical point of views.

The British Museum was already famous itself, and only did general recruitment. If they were to set up a magic department brazenly, the idea of magic would quickly spread around the world.

Charles himself didn't know anything about the Anglican Church being involved in magic, and didn't know that the item that he had researched and compiled a report on was a magical item. The respect that he had for Laura wasn't that of being threatened by her real 'power', but just about sincere faith.

"Oh yeah, Conder. I have something that I would really like to ask you…"

Yes.

The other person who was in the darkness gave such a reply.

It was not an immediate answer, but rather, one that came after a pause. Only those who could immediately sense the atmosphere in this situation could tell that this was an opportune time.

Un, Laura seemed satisfied as she looked at the darkness in front.

"…Conder, you've heard my choice of words, so have you ever laughed at me before?"

"What?"

"Are you hiding in the dark corner in order to hide it?"

"No…no…I would never do such a thing as…"

"Then why must your voice be trembling, you idiot!? Everyone's laughing at my choice of words! Basically, this is all that Tsuchimikado Motoharu's fault for teaching me this odd choice of words…"

"Dear Archbishop, I've heard that you seem rather *uncomfortable* speaking in Japanese."

"DON'T TELL ME THAT THE ENTIRETY OF LONDON HAS HEARD ABOUT THIS!!??"

“Please calm down. Right now, we’re communicating in English. Even if you really can’t speak Japanese fluently, it has nothing to do with this situation.”

“…”

Ahem. Laura purposely coughed to conceal her embarrassment.

Seemed like Charles Conder had tried his best to calm her down, but why was Laura still feeling so bitter?

“Excuse me…may we get down to the proper issue at hand?”

“Of course.”

Laura tried hard to concentrate, and intended to continue on with the topic.

Charles smoothly proceeded on,

“In the report, it is also written that though we have a duplicate of the ‘Stab Sword’ in our museum, we can deduce that the actual item doesn’t exist. This is something that may occur during archaeology, and thus a mistake in the heritage.”

“So what’s this mistake about?”

Laura slowly asked.

The British Museum had an archaeological point of view that could give the Anglican Church, who were magical based, completely different input, so it was considered an extremely valuable mind.

“Yes, you've received this kind of report before, right? Like say…yes, the Nazca Lines (Note: the Nazca lines are located 250 miles south of Lima, Peru’s capital. There’s a variety of about 300 of them, and they’re built during the Nazca culture that’s from B.C. 509 to A.D. 1500. Some pictures are inexplicable, while others are obviously shaped like plants and animals, like hummingbird, monkey, heron, whale, spider and flowers etc.), the Moai figures on Easter Island, and a local example would be the Stonehenge…there are numerous things in history that we discover, yet we don’t know their purpose.”

Charles bent his body in the darkness.

“After this, strange things begin to happen, people will randomly add in reasons as to why these things are made. Legends and stories without evidence that are passed down will accumulate like a snowball. One example that’s easy to understand would be the portrait of the Virgin.”

“Um.”

Laura replied.

The portrait of the Virgin Mary (though a restraint order was issued during a monotheistic Christian occasion, it was rather popular) was hailed by her worshipers to be a ‘miracle item’. At first, there was the rumor that ‘the Virgin in the portrait would weep.’ After a while, it became ‘whoever touched it could heal their wounds,’ ‘whoever hung it could dispel evil spirits,’ as new ‘heritages’ continued to be formed, such that it was on a scale that even the Idol Theory couldn’t explain it. Notwithstanding religious issues, just based on facts alone, it was unbelievable.

“So, it’s like this? The Roman Catholic Church does have a magical sword that’s made of marble. But the Roman Catholic Church doesn’t know for what reason it was created, so they added their own ‘definite reason’ anyway, and thus it continued to spread around, and it ended up being part of their heritage?”

“Yes. But from an archaeological viewpoint, this isn’t of ill intentions. Besides using theory, humans are creatures who’ll use their imagination. Besides the ‘Stab Sword’ this time, there are similar reports around the world. So we can’t blame the Roman Catholic Church entirely…”

Laura thought, what Charles said was true.

Actually, Christianity itself was like that. At first, the content of the Son of God was recorded through the hands of the apostles, and compiled into the Bible. And because of different interpretations, people had disagreements over their view of the Bible. In the end, this ended up meeting the tastes of the countries and their people, creating new religions in the process. This was the actual situation of today’s Christianity, no matter whether it was Catholicism, Protestantism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Russian Orthodox etc, the center of their faith was definitely the ‘Bible’. The language would differ

according to different countries, and ‘a Bible which had content that suited the Anglican Church’ didn’t exist at all.

Even so, it led to a generation of different ideas, which led to the differentiation of faith.

So, such a thing wasn’t abnormal in history.

(…Or maybe, the Roman Catholic Church intended to hide the truth about how the ‘Stab Sword’ was passed down. No, maybe this is just pure speculation?)

Laura shook her head to both sides.

Anyway, she could confirm that the legend of this spiritual weapon called the ‘Stab Sword’ was just a rumor that people had passed around, and that it didn’t exist in the first place.

She didn’t know why the marble sword had been made, but at least it didn’t have the ridiculous effect of ‘killing all the Saints by pointing the tip of the blade at them.’

Thus, the importance of the deal that was to be done in Academy City was lessened. This made Laura heave a sigh of relief.

“Then, did you manage to find out the original heritage behind this marble sword?”

“Yes madam. As this heritage continued to snowball, we don’t have enough evidence to support this. But I’m afraid that this record seems to be correct.”

Eh? Laura tilted her head sideways. That was information that was not in the report.

It seems that I really can’t just rely on magic’s point of view. An ‘ordinary’ viewpoint from archaeology is important as well. Laura’s thoughts went wild.

“To be honest, this item isn’t a ‘sword’?”

“What?”

Laura suspiciously frowned. She saw the keeper of the British Museum holding the duplicate ‘Stab Sword’ in the dark. In the darkness, he turned the white marble sword around.

“It’s a cross. The locals seem to call it the **Croce di Pietro**.”[10]

“ST PET…!?”

At that moment, Laura Stuart nearly stopped breathing.

“You’re saying that that’s the Cross of St Peter?”

Pietro was another name for Peter, one of the Twelve Apostles. Even for those who weren’t familiar with Christianity, they should have at least heard of the ‘St Peter’s Basilica’ that was inside the Vatican. It was truly famed for being the largest Church in the heart of Roman Catholicism, the largest religious sect in the world.

The Cross of St Peter had a huge historical link with the St Peter’s Basilica, and even all of Rome and Vatican. It was the highest level of a spiritual weapon of all Christianity.

Its danger was such that even the ‘Stab Sword’—a spiritual weapon that could kill any Saints no matter the obstacles or distance—couldn’t match up to this.

Hearing the Archbishop exclaim loudly, the keeper of the British Museum must have been shocked. This wasn’t surprising, as Charles was just the authority on archaeology, and had absolutely no idea about magic. So if he didn’t know how dangerous the name of this item that he said was, it couldn’t be helped.

However, Laura was different.

Because she knew all about the magical world and the Christian world, she could understand the seriousness of the issue. She was not looking at Charles, who was standing in the darkness, as she was immersed in her own thoughts.

(This is bad. If so, then the meaning of this ‘deal’ that those people are planning is completely different now. If they really want to carry out this ‘deal’ in ‘Academy City’—)

The Croce di Pietro.

It truly existed in history, but up till now, the Roman Catholic Church had never revealed it. It could be said to be the highest level of spiritual item in historical ‘legends’ that could be compared to the holy items that the Son of God left behind. If it really had the effect that the book recorded…

(With the end of this ‘deal’, Academy City will collapse. No, something worse than that will happen.)

Laura murmured, swallowing her own saliva.

Her face revealed a heroic smile.

Laura thought, in this extremely complicated situation, what should she do to get the best benefits?

Part 7

“The Croce di Pietro…we call it the Cross of St Peter. Really, what’s going on?”

After receiving the report from his phone, Stiyl Magnus muttered these words.

It was an open-air coffee shop near the auto-bus depot. There were ten tables with umbrellas, and Stiyl had taken one of them. Seated in the other seats were Kamijou Touma and Tsuchimikado Motoharu, who was finally awake after having been hit by the sleeping spell that Oriana had used.

There was nothing on the table. They were not waiting to order anything, as no one was in the mood to eat or drink.

“Oi, what’s that Cross of St Peter about? Is it a Cross that’s made of some incredible material called Peter?”

“Peter’s the name of a person, idiot. He’s one of the Twelve Apostles, and legend has it that he has the key to Heaven. But right now, we’re not going to talk about that myth, but rather about some other heritage.”

“Other?”

Kamijou asked again. Tsuchimikado, who hadn’t recovered his strength, said,

“This man called Peter is that…owner of the Holy Vatican. No, strictly speaking, the Holy Vatican was established on the large piece of land that Peter left behind __”

“The Vatican…it’s that smallest country in the world?”

Kamijou tilted his head sideways and asked. Stiyl irritatedly puffed out some smoke.

“This name, the ‘Vatican City State,’ was decided in 1929 under the Lateran Treaty. In the past, it was called the land of the ‘Vatican.’ Also, that place wasn’t that small to begin with. The land differs in size according to time, and at its peak, occupied even Rome, in the centre of Italy, a land that’s 47,000 square kilometres in size. Italy was like the Sengoku era in Japan, because of internal strife, the Vatican shrunk as the unity of Italy became weaker.”

“The question is, how did they establish the Vatican. On the land that Peter left behind, what were the Roman Catholics doing in the first place?”

Kamijou raised a voice of doubt.

Maybe everyone was farming on the wasteland, he wildly thought.

“They built a tomb. By burying Peter’s corpse, and erecting a Cross.”

Kamijou was shocked.

The Cross of St Peter referred to the Cross that was set up on Peter’s grave.

Kamijou didn’t look so good, but Tsuchimikado just ignored him and continued,

“The view of the Roman Catholic Church is that since that place is where Peter’s

buried, the Church didn't want anyone to disturb him, so they wanted to do their best in maintaining his heritage. At first, it was Emperor Augustine who paid his respects and built a Church. During the Renaissance, there was a pleasant large scale revolution. The St Peter's Basilica that's designed by Michelangelo—truly the world's largest Church—is built on the domain of this dead Saint."

Peter died in A.D. 1st century, and the Old St Peter's Basilica was built in the 4th century, while the king of the Lombards handed over power to the Vatican in the 8th century. Actually, there's quite a bit of time difference, but the first turning point was Peter's death and the building of his tomb.

Hearing this explanation, Kamijou was still unclear of what was going on.

"Ugh…is it that…kind of place where you offer sacrifices to those great people?"

"Well, you can say that nya. However, if you think of it another way, it's like 'building one's authority by using the dead body of a Saint.'"

If so, were they really trying to let the deceased rest, or were they using the tomb as a tourist attraction? One couldn't really decide.

"I always felt that…though I don't still know after hearing about this. Are the Roman Catholics a bunch of people who would do something like this?"

"What? There are people who'll do all these sorts of things. Like in England, there's an Archbishop named Thomas Becket (Note: Thomas Becket was appointed to be the Archbishop of Canterbury Cathedral by King Henry II, and for he went against King Henry II, he was assassinated. His exploits were documented in a film 'Becket' made in 1964). This man was assassinated in 29th December 1170 in a certain Church by the Royal Family. This church is Canterbury Cathedral, the main base of the Anglican Church." Tsuchimikado finished speaking, and paused for a while.

Then he smiled,

"The Canterbury Cathedral was a Cathedral that was located far away from the capital, London…but because of the death of a great person, it became the main base straight away. The situation when Archbishop Becket got assassinated ended up triggering an offense against the Royal Family, resulting in the Royal

Family having to recognize the independence of the Church — this place is also known as the birthplace of Anglicanism. Just having ‘the land of a sleeping Saint’ has a large effect, Kami-yan.”

Though Kamijou didn’t understand, he knew that no matter what, any Church that had any link with a Great would have its value multiplied exponentially.

“…Also, the thing that Oriana’s carrying around isn’t the ‘Stab Sword’, but rather that ‘Croce whatever,’ huh? Is that a dangerous thing as well? Or is it like an art piece that has a strange and rare value?”

“Both. But we’re focusing on the former.”

Stiyl impatiently puffed out some smoke.

“Didn’t I say this before? This huge piece of land inside the Vatican — or strictly speaking, the place where ‘Christianity’ was established. If so, on the other hand…”

“In other words?”

Kamijou asked.

“Yes, any place that has the Croce di Pietro will be under the Roman Catholic Church’s dominion. Even Academy City isn’t exempted.”

Wait wait…!? Kamijou was at a loss of words.

Tsuchimikado said in a bitter tone,

“The ‘Stab Sword’ was rumored to be ‘a sword that can pierce a dragon and pin it onto the ground.’”

He paused, held his breath for a while, and continued,

“This large existence that has huge wings, that will either guard a treasure while asleep or desire for a massacre, such a ‘dragon’ has the hidden meaning of serving God’s ‘angels’ or the fallen ‘Devil’ nya. ‘Pinning the dragon’ has the meaning of ‘turning this place to Holy grounds by letting the angels protect this place’ hidden in it…those bastards.”

Kamijou sighed.

There were many doubts he wanted to ask about, but speech wasn't going to convey them properly.

"Wait a sec! What do you mean by 'dominion'? What are those guys intending to do here!?"

"This country called the Vatican is like a large Church inside. Kami-yan, that interior is rather strange. Over there, the balance between fortune and misfortune is distorted, no matter what one does, it'll be beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church."

Kamijou was still unable to understand Tsuchimikado's explanation.

Stiyl continued,

"Specifically, the area inside the Vatican is filled with magic that biased. Things that normally happen will turn out to be of the Roman Catholic Church's benefit. For example, it's like using a magnet to control a roulette in a casino, ignoring the original action of the bead to make it land inside the number that one wants."

Hearing this, Kamijou still didn't understand.

But, he knew that 'there was a magic spell that allowed the circumstances to be beneficial to some people.'

"So, it's like that guy, huh? Like that alchemist, who can materialize anything that he wishes for?"

The man named Aureolus Izzard.

The result of him developing his alchemist skills to the extreme, and creating his own spell of 'turning anything he wishes for into reality' was that because of it, he was defeated by his own 'doubt'…

"No, it's not like using human willpower to use Ars Magna. This is about 'making things advantageous for the Roman Catholic Church.' But, if such a thing was to be set up in Academy City, then what?"

“Now that you mention it…”

Would Academy City end up being beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church?

It was a blurry image, as Kamijou couldn’t think of any specific thought. He just said out the thought that was on his mind.

“About that…it’ll be beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church. Then if the Roman Catholics are to come over to Academy City, wouldn’t they become very lucky?”

“That’s right; you may regard it as such. What will happen if the effect of the Croce di Pietro acts like a document? It’s not a bad thing, as any Roman Catholic who enters Academy City may lose a large sum of money when they gamble, but will end up winning money in the long run. Even if the building’s bombed, there won’t be any injury at all. This is unnatural. Also…”

Stiyl cynically twisted his lips.

“The Croce di Pietro will help anyone who isn’t a Roman Catholic as well. If the Roman Catholics are to continue winning money through gambling, normally there would be losers as well. But the Croce di Pietro would create a nice losing situation. Even if a building is bombed and destroyed, nobody would be hurt. It creates a ‘oh, nobody’s hurt, that’s good’ kind of situation.”

“???”

Kamijou tilted his head.

If what Stiyl said was true,

“If so, wouldn’t everyone be happy? That shouldn’t be a problem.”

“That is where the problem is.”

Stiyl mentions this,

“Listen, if one doesn’t set up this thing known as the Croce di Pietro from the start, nobody would be losing money through gambling, and nobody will target Roman Catholics in their bombing attempts. On first glance, everyone’s happy.

But in actuality, the Croce di Pietro brings a huge burden to anyone around, and normally in situations where one cannot see.”

Tsuchimikado, who had no strength left in his upper body, was sprawled on the table. He continued,

“Actually, in Christian history, the number of times this happiness was ‘switched’ is unexpectedly frequent. Like San Matorras, or as the Anglicans call him, San Martin. This guy has a very interesting story. When he went to evangelize Christianity, he once broke an ancient pagan temple, and even intended to cut a holy tree down. The non-believing farmers who didn’t want to become Christians resisted till the end, and said, 'If there’s a God protecting you, go ahead and cut down this tree. If you’re really protected by God, you won’t die.'”

To think that Tsuchimikado, who normally was just messing around, was able to say this Christian fairy tale so smoothly. To his classmate Kamijou, this was truly not a familiar sight.

“Hearing this, San Martin faced the holy tree that was falling on him, and drew a cross on his chest. Then, the unthinkable happened. The holy tree fell to the other side, and nearly crushed the farmers. The farmers were touched that there was really a miracle from God, and promptly accepted Christianity… Don’t you find this strange nya? The one who used this inexplicable force to cause this holy tree to fall towards the farmers was San Martin himself. He could have allowed that tree to fall somewhere that’s even safer. Come to think about it, he could have just cut the tree down easily nya? Why can he still receive this amount of thanks…?”

“Anyway, the result is that, the holy tree that fell the other way didn’t kill the non-believers. Because this was the mercy that God gave, every farmer rejoiced at having the chance to change their religion. No matter whether this outcome is good or bad, their history, traditions and spiritual culture were completely erased.”

Kamijou thought, so what.

This indeed could bring about happiness, but not because of ‘something that happened that brings about happiness,’ but rather ‘happiness that was brought about no matter what happens.’

Tsuchimikado lifted his head, and said,

“The effects of this method had gotten some recognition in psychology nya. First, satisfy a condition ‘A’ that cannot be fulfilled. When the other party begs and cries, saying that he can’t do it, force him to do the original condition ‘B’ that one wants. In this case, it’ll be easier to succeed than to offer condition ‘B’ right from the start. Just like how ‘Compared to ‘A’, ‘B’ is so much better, we’re really lucky’ nya. By manipulating the specific order, manipulating the balance between one negative effect versus another, one can reduce the relative value required for happiness.”

Stiyl twitched the cigarette in his mouth up and down, and continued,

“The Croce di Pietro uses the psychological effects of this myth. No matter what happens, the situation will end up benefiting the Roman Catholic Church. When people are given unrealistic proposals, they’ll agree for some unknown reason… to the Roman Catholic Church, wouldn’t this place be the most comfortable and enjoyable ‘Holy Land’?”

The magicians’ words gradually sunk into Kamijou’s head.

A long time was needed for one to slowly understand such a large scale issue.

“Wait a sec, Stiyl. About the deal of that Croce di Pietro, what is Oriana and company going to do exactly?”

“If this world is split into two, one can classify them as the science side and the magic side. Right now, it’s on a delicate balance.”

Stiyl simply replied.

“Among them, the leader of the science side is Academy City. If this Academy City ends up being under the dominion of the Roman Catholic Church, what do you think will happen to the balance of this world?”

Ah! Kamijou finally realized it.

If the science side, which occupied half of the world, ended up being ‘some random group’ of a magic sect, then with ‘the science side that occupied the world plus one’s own magic sect,’ that sect could control more than 50% of the

world. Then, they just needed to do the simple thing of a majority resolution in order to control the world at will.

Moreover.

If that sect was the Roman Catholic Church, the largest Christian sect in the world.

“If any sect is attacked by both the magic side and science side, organisations that are of a ‘single world’ will be unable to resist; it’s like being attacked in front and behind. The balance of world power will be entirely concentrated on the Roman Catholic Church.”

The Roman Catholic Church didn’t need to consider ‘what they had to do in order to conquer Academy City.’ By planting the Croce di Pietro in Academy City, Academy City would do anything that’d be ‘beneficial to the Roman Catholic Church’ after that.

Specifically, what would happen?

Would the board of directors suddenly decide to seek asylum under the Roman Catholic Church?

Or would Academy City sink into bad management, and end up receiving funding from the Roman Catholic Church?

Or would Academy City itself be reduced to ash, and end up being rebuilt by the high-ranking Roman Catholics, and not the Japanese government?

Though he didn’t know how, Kamijou knew that no matter what, the situation would end up being ‘most beneficial’ to the Roman Catholic Church.

And the people of Academy City, nobody would question the outcome.

No matter whether it was an unreasonable request, no matter how heavy the burden that they had to carry.

It was a world where everyone had happiness.

“Then the deal that Oriana…”

“Yeah. It’s not a simple deal of the spiritual item Stab Sword or the Croce di Pietro, but rather, the deal is about the ‘benefit to the Roman Catholic Church’s dominance’ — Academy City, and the world.”

Stiyl Magnus inhaled deeply.

As the cigarette in his mouth received oxygen, it started to give an orangish-red glow.

“The courier, Oriana Thomson, and the trader, Lidvia Lorenzetti. Besides them, there’s no receiver on the other end — this deal just doesn’t involve anyone else at all. The suspicion that it’s the Russian Orthodox Church is a fake, because this is something that the Roman Catholic Church wants to send to themselves.”

He paused, and said a last sentence,

“We have to prevent this deal from taking place. Otherwise, it’ll end up being even worse than the destruction of the world.”

Kamijou Touma and Tsuchimikado Motoharu nodded their heads.

But nobody knew what the three of them could do.

There was no guarantee that they could beat Oriana Thomson and the person behind her, Lidvia Lorenzetti.

Even so.

Those two thought that by forcing thoughts that were beneficial to themselves onto the people of Academy City, the Roman Catholic Church would gain world domination.

—He had to use this hand of his to destroy this illusion.

Part 8

Kamijou Touya and Shiina were walking on the streets.

It was now 1 PM. According to the schedule in the thick tour guidebook, it should be lunchtime. But right now, there seemed to be matches going on at other places. Discrepancies in the schedule were rather common for sporting events like Daihaseisai.

If it was an international event like the Olympics or the World Cup, the schedule would be much tighter.

Touya rolled up his sleeves, smoothed his wrinkled shirt, and said,

“Alright, okaa-san. Though it’s late now, let’s find a place to eat.”

“Ara ara, you’re right.”

Shiina readjusted her lady’s hat.

“…Why do I feel that I didn’t see Touma just now? Was he really in that match?”

“There are so many people competing in the same event, so sometimes it’s hard to look for him. We’ll hear about Touma’s heroics when we meet him later. Right now, the most important thing is to get our seats.”

Touya frantically looked around for a place to eat lunch, not because he was hungry.

One thing that Daihaseisai had in comparison to other sporting events was the need to ‘book seats.’

Compared to ordinary events, in Daihaseisai, the arenas had to change according to the type of competition. It was not that getting one’s seats once was enough, as parents would have to switch places according to where their children were having their events. Of course, eating lunch was the same. Once the event was over, the contestants and the spectators would be chased out of the arena, so they had to ‘ensure that they got a place to get their lunch.’

There were 2.3 million residents in Academy City, and there were many more

spectators. With so many people looking for a place to eat at the same time…it was not hard to imagine the school cafeterias being crammed with people.

Touya looked around, his hair combed to the back.

“It’s supposed to be lunch at twelve. We arrived late because of the matches getting delayed. To be honest, it’s hard to find a place now.”

“Ara ara, I’ve prepared bentos, so you don’t have to find such a good place.”

Shiina happily said as she looked at the rattan basket hanging on her arm. Seeing this, Touya frowned, and said,

“Okaa-san, that won’t do. These are the bentos that you put so much effort into preparing. Let’s find the best place to eat our meal. Touma and I would be happy if we do so. It’ll be fine if okaa-san feels happy as well.”

“Ara ara, Touya, really.”

Shiina smiled as she placed a hand on her face. Touya, who was releasing his tie with one hand, and looking around for a place, didn’t notice her smile and gaze.

“…Hm, the seats at this shop are occupied. Of course, there are other ways to look for empty seats, or should we contact Touma and ask him for his suggestion —eh?”

Touya, who was considering this, saw a familiar face coming over from his opposite side.

It was the female university student he met at the opening ceremony.

Right now, there was a middle-school aged girl walking beside her. The girl was wearing a jogging shirt and shorts that contestants wear. Shoulder-length tea-colored hair, he remembered the name of that girl seemed to be ‘Mikoto.’

The two seemed to be sisters who were extremely close to one another, as they were conversing loudly.

“Oh my, Mikoto. Don’t tell me you’re angry that dad hasn’t turned up? I also begged for the university to give me an entire week off, so please spare me.”

“…I’m not. Isn’t dad working in London? It’ll be even more troublesome if he forces himself to come over with a pale face.”

“Un. If dad were to hear your angry tone, he’ll be delighted. But to you, it’s better for dad not to come, huh?”

“??? Why?”

“Because doesn’t Mikoto like some other guy? If dad heard this, his reaction would be rather interesting!”

“Peh!?”

The middle-school girl suddenly did a spit-take. Mikoto's face flushed red, and she stared at the female university student who was taller than her by a head.

“WH…WHWHWHWHWHWHWHHYYYYYYYYY ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THIS ALL OF A SUDDEN!!”

“Eh? Isn’t it supposed to be like this? You can’t resist hugging the pillow when you’re in bed, being unable to sleep as you’re thinking about that guy whose black hair shoots up to the sky?”

“No…nonono way! On what basis are you saying that! Also, how did you know about that idiot!?”

“I’m concerned about this, to think that you’re calling that guy ‘that idiot’ with such an affectionate tone. Mikoto, what do you hope to gain through the penalty game? Am I right? Isn’t it good that dad isn’t here? So what’s the result of the bet, Mikoto?”

“The penalty game…where did you hear about it? OI! STOP WRIGGLING AROUND, HURRY UP AND ANSWER!!”

Seeing the middle-school girl emitting blue and white sparks from her shoulders and cropped bangs, Touya got a renewed feeling that this was Academy City. Because his son was an esper at Level 0, so he really hadn’t noticed it, but this was truly an esper city where those superpowers in movies and manga did appear.

“Isn’t there a night walk tonight after the competitive events? So what do you intend to do, Mikoto? Or are you going to use that electricity to create neon lights just for the two of you?”

“Eh? Your tastes are really bad…eveeveveven if there’s a night walk, that has not…nothing to do with me…”

To them, as they had ‘superpowers,’ they were not surprised by these sorts of things. Touya thought, it was probably be an atmosphere that only Academy City had.

The female university student and middle-school student seemed to have noticed Touya, who was staring blankly at them. The female university student’s face glowed,

“Ah! Thanks for just now. Thanks to you, I met up with Mikoto at last.”

The middle-school girl frowned at the female university student.

“…Wait a sec, who’s this group of people? Are they people you acquainted with while working?”

“Nope, these are the parents of that boy that you’re so mindful of. Come on, Mikoto, present yourself properly.”

“YOU’RE TOO NOISY! KEEP QUIET! I SAID THAT IT ISN’T LIKE THAT!!”

The middle-school girl looked like she was going to bite on the other person and not let go as she shouted. The university student however didn’t seem to notice it,

“Oh yeah, may I inquire, have you eaten your lunch yet? If you don’t mind, do you want to have lunch with us? We’ve booked a small restaurant, so bringing in bentos should be alright. Right Mikoto?”

Touya considered what the female university student proposed.

They could bring bentos into a restaurant…so it seemed like they wouldn’t be blamed for this if they did this during Daihaseisai, where the space was really

limited. It'd be better if they ate Shiina's bentos with others than eating at a quiet place. And to the extremely petite Shiina, it was probably better for her not to walk on the asphalt under the hot sun.

Thus, Touya said,

"Alright then. Mind if we add another person later?"

"Fine by me. Sorry, Mikoto."

Facing the smiling university student, the middle-school student turned around, as she speechlessly emitted blue and white sparks.

This girl really has character, Touya thought as he shook his head, and turned towards Shiina.

"Okaa-san, this should be alright—why are you revealing such a terrifying expression?"

Seeing Shiina reveal this lost expression from the bottom of her heart, the shadow of her face being able to be on a 1000-yen note or a 5000-yen note, Touya inadvertently backed off. Shiina's lips weren't moving at all, but one could hear a clear voice,

"Really, Touya, you're always like this. What do you want me to do? Do you want me to throw the entire basket of bentos at you? Ara ara ara ara ara ara ara ara, this is too bad, the completely innocent Touma will have to remain hungry now?"

Why must she be angry!? Touya backed away. Shiina was not joking. She was the type of lady where during a quarrel between husband and wife, whether it was a plate or a DVD player, she would throw anything that she could get her hands on.

Thus, Touya quickly backed off, keeping a safe distance.

Unexpectedly, he knocked into another person behind.

"Wa!!I…I'm sorry!!"

Kamijou Touya turned around, quickly lowered his head, and apologized, but instead, he was staring at her huge breasts. As they were too close to each other, he intended to bend down and apologize, but it ended up looking like he was peeking at her.

The woman's breasts were just 4mm away from the tip of his nose.

Touya quickly looked up at twice the speed.

"I…I'm sorry, I'm really sorry! WAAHHH…okaa-san's glare from behind is really piercing me…!!"

The situation had gotten out of hand, but Touya didn't have the courage to look back and confirm Shiina's expression. Touya looked at the woman in front of him.

"It's alright, are you hurt? Sorry, I'm not used to having so many people around."

The woman in front had blond hair that was curled in a complicated way.

White skin and blue pupils, a Westerner with such stunning looks.

Her homogeneous body gave off a seductive atmosphere.

A metal sound could be heard.

On her long index finger, there was a metal ring that was about 2cm in diameter. Wrapped by the ring were rectangular pieces of paper that were as big as a chewing gum wrapper. They seemed to be flashcards that were used to memorize individual words.

She played around with this stack of flashcards like a key-chain.

"This nee-chan doesn't mind at all — I really want to say this, but I'm really younger than you, so I can't really call myself 'nee-chan.' Bye bye."

After saying this, she turned her back on Touya, and walked away.

She then naturally mixed into the crowd, and soon, she was gone. She had such

an outstanding appearance, and she did give off a rather seductive atmosphere, but it seemed that nobody noticed her.

Touya stared at the blond lady through the corner of his eyes.

“Ara ara, ara ara ara. Touya? You’re rather awake now, huh? Would breaking your joints be letting you off too lightly? Ara ara, how irritating, what should I do? Should I just let you be one of the stars in the night sky?”

“Eh…it’s not that, okaa-san, you’re mistaken. I didn’t stare at that woman’s attractive face and breasts and waists and legs, so that’s…this is all my fault!!”

Seeing Touya turn his excuse into an apology, Mikoto softly said,

“…Like father, like son.”

They didn’t realize.

The things that were happening inside Academy City.

The boy that was close to them was running around, trying to stop this.

Also,

The danger, that was within 4mm from Touya’s nose.

There were no onlookers that were safe. In this street that was full of dangerous people, Daihaseisai was proceeding on, and heating up.

Whether it was in the scientific sense, or the magical sense.

Afterword

To the readers who continued to buy the books ever since the first volume was released, it's been quite a while.

To the studious readers who read nine volumes in one go, nice to meet you.

I'm Kamachi Kazuma.

Everytime, I felt that it's like a curveball. This time, it's a curveball as well, and the interesting thing is, what kind of curveball was tossed?

The keywords related to magic here are things that are rather basic. They are 'grimoire' and 'magic circle,' and these are common terms that were used in the volumes up till now.

The story is set in Daihaseisai — which is an extremely large-scaled sports meet. How do you feel about it? I had nearly forgotten about how a sports day is like, so when I was writing this book, I was worrying about what a sports day would be like as I worked on this book. I'm happy to be able to write something that gives the feeling of a sports carnival.

I'll like to thank these two people for their help: Haimura-san, who is in charge of illustrations, and Miki-san, who's in charge of printing. Without these two people, this work wouldn't be complete at all. I look forward to continuing work with them.

I'll also like to thank all the readers. Without you, it's impossible to produce this work. Please continue to give me feedback and support.

And now, this volume ends here.

I hope you'll continue to read the next volume.

At this moment, let me sign off first.

Come to think of it, who's the main female protagonist this time?

-Kamachi Kazuma-

Notes

1. ↑ Grand Champion Star Festival
2. ↑ **Kanji:** Tracking Sealer
3. ↑ **Kanji:** Tuesday of Confession
4. ↑ **Kanji:** Thrusting Picket Sword
5. ↑ , often used to describe athletes.
6. ↑ **Kanji:** Two Sides of Chaos and Calm
7. ↑ **Kanji:** Shorthand Original
8. ↑ **Kanji:** Bright-colored Severing Axe
9. ↑ **Kanji:** Sleeping Wind
10. ↑ **Kanji:** Apostle's Cross

Toaru Majutsu no Index — Volume 09

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